THE WALK, CONVERSATION AND CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

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Chemistry

To Dear Dr. Matthews,

From O. Jones.

Seattle, Wash.

Dec. 23, 1905.

God bless the giver

THE WALK, CONVERSATION AND CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

SABBATH EVENING ADDRESSES

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THE WALK, CONVERSATION AND CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

I

THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON

Heb. i. 3

THE Greek word χαρακτήρ—character—is a most expressive and a most suggestive word. The artists and the handicraftsmen of Greece employed this word to describe the etching on the face of a seal and the engraving on the face of a stamp. And from that first use of this ancient word we find it widening out to embrace every kind of distinctive feature; every kind of special sign and symbol. And then after this rich and expressive Greek word becomes naturalised and acclimatised into the English language, we soon have such serviceable words of our own as 'characterise,' 'characteristic,' and 'characterisation,' all springing up and branching out from the original and parent word. Beginning with its artistic and handicraft uses, both in Greek and in English, this most fruitful and most helpful of words was immediately carried up into the far loftier fields of morals and religion, till there is no word

we oftener employ in the vocabulary of conduct than just this Greek-English word, character. Every day we find ourselves saying that such and such a man bears a blameless character, and that such and such another man bears a bad character. We say of one man that he has completely lost his character, and of another man that he has succeeded in regaining his character. And, then, some of our greatest authors have given their whole strength to the study of human character, both in themselves and in other men. And they have set forth their studies in great books that stand at the head of our very best literature. Thus, we have the Characters of Theophrastus in Greek, and the Characters of La Bruyère in French. While all Shakespeare's characters and all John Bunyan's characters and all William Law's characters are nothing less than household words with us. And then Bishop Butler has given his great talents to the study and the exhibition of human character in a way that has made his sermons on human nature to be simply ethical classics to all time. And Butler's well-known definition of human character may very well come in here, both as illustrating his peculiar way of writing, as also because his authoritative words will carry us another step onward in our preliminary inquiry on this subject. 'By character,' says the Bishop, in his bald, dry, deep way, 'is meant that temper, taste, disposition, and whole frame of mind, from which we act in one way rather than in another way. Those principles from which a

man acts, when they become fixed and habitual in him, we call his character. And consequently, there is a far greater variety in men's characters than there is in the features of their faces.'

But, with all that, by far the loftiest and most august use to which this Greek word has ever been put is its use in the text. The very finest words of this world are infinitely unworthy of such heavenly employment and such heavenly honour as those of the text. To take the very purest and the most perfect words of earth and to plunge them into the heavenly glory of the text is enough to consume them to dust and ashes. Still, notwithstanding all that, our earth-born word character stands there shining in the light which no man can approach unto—shining but not consumed. Yes; there it stands, partaking of that awful light, and reflecting some rays of that awful light down upon us, till by means of its light we are enabled to approach some sure steps nearer to that mystery of Godliness, the Eternal Word, Who is Very God of Very God, and is at the same time our perfect pattern, and the original source and guarantee of our Christian character. The absolutely highest use to which this much-honoured word has ever been put is when it is employed upon God the Father, and then upon His Eternal Son, as it is employed in the text. Now, what, exactly, is meant in the text by the 'character' of God the Father? What does the apostle point at when he speaks of the express image, or as it is in the original,

the character of God the Father? Well, God's character, His express image, is just His divine nature. It is just His love, and His joy, and His peace, and His long-suffering, and His gentleness, and all His goodness. That is God's character. It is His fulness of all these things that makes Him God, and our God. Jehovah revealed His whole moral and spiritual character when He descended and proclaimed the name of the LORD to Moses on the Mount. 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.' That is God's name and nature. That is God's express image. That is God's character. That is what makes Him the only living and true God. That is what makes all the psalmists extol Him. And that is what makes Micah exclaim at the end of his life, and as the seal of his ministry—Who is a God like unto Thee!

And then the Son of God is set forth to us in the New Testament as the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. Or, as the original Greek has it, the Father's whole 'character' is fully and for ever stamped and sealed down upon His Son. While the eternal generation of the Divine Son is unapproachably beyond and above us; while the conveyance of the Father's character to the Son is high, and we cannot attain unto it; at the same time the conveying and the impressing of the Divine character of the Father and the Son on the human nature of our Lord is that supreme study, and all-satisfying contemplation, to which the New Testa-

ment on its every page invites us. From His birth to His death, we are enabled and we are intended to see the character of our Lord manifested in every word He spake, and in every act He did. The whole of the four Gospels are written, and have been put into our hands, in order that we may have continually before our eyes the character of Jesus Christ, both for our justifying faith in Him, and for our sanctifying imitation of Him. If you had been born and brought up in the same house with the Child Jesus, what do you think you would have remembered, and told all your days, about His childhood character? What express image would you have carried away with you from that house in which He and you both dwelt? Cicero as a schoolboy had such talents and such a character, and his schoolfellows had such wonderful stories to tell about him, that their fathers and mothers used to visit the school less to see their own children at their lessons than to see the young Cicero, concerning whom they were constantly hearing such wonderful stories. Well, suppose you had been at school with the young Christ, what would you have told your parents about Him, and about His ways, every night when you returned home? And if you had been a carpenter in the same workshop with Him, in what do you suppose He would have differed so much from all the other workmen? And so on, through His whole earthly life. For instance, suppose He had been a guest in the same house with you, for a shorter or longer season. What do you

think you would have remembered in Him different from the other guests? The Baptist would have passed on all the best dishes, and would have drunk nothing but water, and, like Marcus's father and Father John, not much of that. But Jesus of Nazareth ate and drank and conversed on all subjects, just like all the other guests. There was nothing ascetic, or superior to other men, about Him. And yet there was something about Him in all these things that immediately and indelibly stamped itself on every open eye and on every good and honest heart. It was His character. His character came out in everything He did and said, and in everything He did not do and did not say. His character was so clearly cut in Him that it could not be hid. You never met Him on the highway or on the street; you never spent five minutes in His society; you never stood under the same tree with Him till a shower passed over, that you did not see in Him the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person, till you went home saying to all your kinsfolk that you had beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

I invite you, then, to the study of our Lord's character and walk and conversation; and, in that, to the parallel study and improvement of your own character and walk and conversation. For, first His character, and then your own, those are the two things that most concern you and me in all this world. And that is so, because all else in this world shall for ever

perish, and that too before very long. Your moral character alone will abide when this world shall for ever have passed away. Open your eyes then and look around you; and everything you see exists and works together for the sake of the moral character of men. Moral and spiritual character is the chief end of God and of man and of all their works. The creation of the world; its continuance and its administration; the coming of Christ, His work, His death, His departure, His return; the final cause and chief end of all that is the moral and spiritual character of mankind. And thus it will be that when all these things shall have finished the work given them to do, the moral and spiritual character of godly men shall alone survive. All else shall pass away as a tale that is told; one thing alone shall endure for ever, and that is the image and likeness of our characters to the character of Christ. Death, with one stroke of his hand, will one day strip us bare of all that we now pursue and possess. But the last enemy will not be able to lay a finger on our Christian character, unless it is to add on its finishing touches. Our Lord carried up to His Father's house a human heart, a human character, which was and is and will for ever be a new wonder in Heaven. He carried up all His human nature with Him, with all the stamp and impress of His divine nature upon it: all His human meekness and humility and lowliness of mind; all His human love and pity and compassionateness; all His human sympathy and approachableness and

affableness. And like Him, if we are found at last in Him and like Him, we also shall carry to the same place the same things that He carried. And they are the only things we possess here that are worth carrying so far; even as they are the only things that will be admitted there. And there is no fear but that all these things will be both admitted and welcomed there, as well as all those who shall possess them. For all these things are nothing else but the divine nature here and now partaken of by us, and then to all eternity to be possessed by us. And he who possesses these things in Christ and in himself; he who has while here put on the whole express image of God in Christ; he will be immortal with the same immortality as the God-Man Himself; and will be for ever blessed with the same blessedness as the God-Man Himself. Come then, and let us begin to study the character of Christ, in order to put it on. And let us not cease both studying it and putting it on until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in His times He shall show; who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

II

THAT HOLY THING

Luke i. 35.

THE very grammar of this great text arrests us; that holy *thing*. If it were not for our so deadening familiarity with the surface sound of this great text, we could not fail to be arrested, and indeed startled, with this so singular, and so unexpected expression; that holy *thing*. For that expression, when we take time to think of it, is never applied to any other child in all the world but Mary's Child. And it is a very startling, and indeed staggering expression to be found applied to her Child, to hear Him called that *thing*, even when it is added, that *holy* thing. But the evangelist's so startling expression has the seal of the Holy Ghost set upon it. For God hath revealed these things to us by His Spirit; because the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

Human nature in all its stages and in all its conditions is a very wonderful thing. Human nature is by far the most wonderful thing in our

whole universe of things. At the same time, human nature is but a thing, till a far more wonderful thing than itself is incorporated and identified with it. But as soon as the thing we call human nature is taken up into himself by a person, that human nature is no longer a mere thing; it has now become part and parcel of a man; it has now become a human being, and is henceforth to be reckoned up as one of the children of men. And, in like manner, when 'that holy thing,' which was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was taken up into Himself by the Son of God, that holy thing henceforward and for ever becomes and abides part and parcel of the Son of God. For, Who is the Redeemer of God's elect? The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the Eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever. But, how did Christ, being the Son of God, become man? Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to Himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin. Now, it was that true body and that reasonable soul, taken together, which constituted that holy thing of which the angel here speaks in such salutation and in such congratulation to the mother of our Lord.

That also was all to be fulfilled which Simeon pronounced over Mary and her Child in the

Temple—Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also. But that was long afterwards. That was more than thirty years afterwards. Whereas, what the angel promised began to be fulfilled immediately. For never, before nor since, had any mother but Mary such a holy thing laid in her lap. Never had any other mother such a holy child running around her knee. And a holy child is always a happy child. And wherever a holy child is found happiness always dwells there. Always, on earth and in heaven, the more holiness the more happiness, till there was one humble home in Nazareth where heaven came down to earth; at anyrate as long as that holy child was the only child in that house. For Mary's first-born Son never caused His happy mother neither a single sigh nor a single tear. He caused her nothing but an ever-increasing wonder and worship and praise. Mary never needed to teach her first-born Son to sing this sad psalm of our sons,—

> When deep within our swelling hearts
> The thoughts of pride and anger rise;
> When bitter words are on our tongues,
> And tears of passion in our eyes.

Joseph and Mary had often to teach all that to James, and to Joses, and to Simon, and to Judas, and to all their sisters, but never to their eldest brother. Mary, with her firstborn Son, was such a mother as God had intended every mother to be from Eve to the end of the world. But after Cain and Abel, and all such unholy things began to be born of women, every mother's best happiness

fled back to heaven, where it awaits every mother like Mary, and every child like Jesus. Blessed, said all Mary's neighbours and kinsfolk as often as they again visited her house and laid their hands on her Child's head—Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!

'Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, A body hast Thou prepared me.' A body, He means, perfectly prepared, perfectly adapted, and in every possible way exactly fitted, for the work that was given Him to do. And accordingly the deep old divines were wont to call our Lord's human nature the *instrumentum Deitatis*; that is to say, the engine and the instrument of His Godhead. And entering imaginatively and realisingly into their own deep doctrine, they said also that it was not every true body and reasonable soul that could have been made a fit instrument for the great work the Son of God came to earth to do as our Redeemer. Some of the bolder schoolmen went so far as to say that no other woman in all Israel, but Mary, could have supplied our Lord with the proper substance that He needed; no other mind and heart but Mary's could have been the source and the mould of His human mind and His human heart. 'Hers,' they sang, 'was the face that unto Christ had most resemblance.' Be all that as it may; given the substance of which the evangelist writes with such chaste reserve, the Holy Ghost then took that part of Mary's substance and made it into that holy thing of which the angel here

speaks with such comfort and such encouragement. It will help you to see how well fitted our Lord was with His body and with His mind and with His heart, if you will but listen to Paul's absolute agony over the body and the mind and the heart that his mother had prepared for him. Had Paul's mother brought forth another such holy thing as Mary brought forth; had the Holy Ghost prepared another such body and soul for Paul as He prepared for Paul's Master; had an instrument been placed in Paul's hands at all like the *instrumentum Deitatis* that was placed in our Lord's hands,—what a holy life and what a happy life Paul would have lived! What a finish and what a perfection he would have given to his apostolic work! And what radiant Epistles, and without a cloud on them, he would have written and bequeathed to us! But as it was Paul was hampered, and hindered, and humiliated, and driven desperate, by that unholy thing he had inherited from his mother; by that body of death from the burden and the pollution of which he never found a single day's deliverance in his whole life. And indeed the whole situation of things with Paul and with us all was such; so impossible was it for God to get His work done by such an instrument as that was with which Paul was compelled to work, that God had to take another way with His servants and with their work altogether. A new and better way, which is best described in Paul's own words, as thus—To him that worketh not; to him that cannot be ex-

pected to work with such an instrument; but that believeth on Him that both could work and did work; to him his faith in Jesus Christ and in His work is counted for righteousness.

But happy as we are to see our surety and substitute, Jesus Christ, finishing His work for us with the holy and strong instrument which the Holy Ghost had prepared for Him; and saddening as it is to see the utter wretchedness of Paul as he battles on with his body of death; all that will not impress us either with the happiness of Jesus Christ, or with the wretchedness of Paul, like a share within ourselves of Paul's agonising experience with his vile body, and his still viler soul so sold under sin. For we have all been born of our mothers into Paul's very same estate of sin and misery. As to that there is no difference. 'Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.' As Calvin has it—'After the heavenly image in man was effaced, not only did he lose his original wisdom, virtue, truth, justice and holiness, but he became involved in those dire pests of blindness, impotence, vanity, impurity, and unrighteousness; and worst of all, he involved his posterity also in his ruin; he plunged them into the same estate of wretchedness.' And as Newman has it—'Adam,

before his fall, felt, we may suppose, love, fear, hope, joy, dislike, just as we now do; but, then, he only felt these things when he ought and as he ought. But at the fall this beautiful order and peace was broken up; the same passions remained, but their use and their action was changed. They rushed into extremes, sometimes excessive, sometimes the reverse. Indignation was corrupted into wrath, self-love into selfishness, self-respect became pride, and emulation jealousy and envy Thus man's soul became a chaos, and needed a new creation.' And again, 'There is a knowledge and a love of human nature, which saints possess, which follows on an intimate experience of what human nature actually is in its irritability and sensitiveness, its despondency and changeableness, its sickliness, its blindness, and its impotence. Saints have this gift, and it is from above; though it be gained, humanly speaking, either of what they themselves were before their conversion, or from a keen apprehension and appreciation of their own natural feelings and tendencies.'

This so arresting text rewards us with a thousand thoughts of the deepest and the most profitable import. For instance this thought, this truth,—that in the matter of holiness, in the matter of His body and His soul, our Lord began where we shall end. He entered at once on a birth-holiness that we shall not enter on till the day of our death. The noble-minded Stoics called the day of their death their true birthday, and so it is. We are born again, long indeed before the

day of our death, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. We shall not enter on our full holiness till we shall see Him as He is. 'Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, who also were in Christ before me,' says the apostle. And we salute Jesus Christ Himself, because He was in the fulness of His holiness so long before us; even from the day of His birth. He entered into His full liberty on the same day on which we entered into our great bondage. For He began by being fully sanctified. But we by His grace shall at last end where He began. And this is the true key to the whole mystery of our present life; this is the proper and complete explanation of that awful mystery. That, like Paul, we are bearing about, meantime, a body of sin and death, and are in that body waiting for the adoption. For I reckon that the sufferings of our sanctification are not worthy to be compared with the holiness which shall be revealed in us. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

Old Andrew Gray of Glasgow, an old divine but a young man, in his masterly *Spiritual Warfare*, after the rich manner of his day draws out no fewer than seven advantages to his people out of their estate of a too late, and a too partial, holiness. Their holiness is begun indeed, he tells them, in this life, but at best, only begun. Since

sin is what it is, he says, a true holiness begun, but dwelling in the same man's heart with such an inward world of indwelling sin, that brings home to such a man, as nothing else can, what sin really is. And anything that teaches us what sin really is, is half our salvation. And even half our salvation is surely a great advantage. It is expedient and advantageous for us not to taste only, but to drink deep into, the unspeakable wretchedness and misery of sin. And that could not have been taught us in any other way than by a partial, an ever-lingering, and a never-finished sanctification. And then a sanctification like that compels us to give Jesus Christ and His whole salvation, imputed righteousness and all, His proper place in our minds and in our hearts. And that is an advantage to Him and to us, beyond all blessing, and beyond all praise.

The angel described Mary's child to her as 'that holy thing.' Now, I will not pain you and offend you by calling your child the opposite of that. For, does not the apostle himself say that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband, and that, therefore, their children are holy? But I will say this, that if you would have your child not ceremonially and conventionally holy only, but personally and really and everlastingly holy, and if you yourself know what holiness is, you must set before yourself for your child no less a holiness than that of the Holy Child Himself. And as often as you see the heart-breaking proofs

that your child has not been born as Mary's Child was born: when you cannot but see and feel in your innermost heart your child's fretfulness, and quarrelsomeness, and rudeness, and sulkiness, and impudence, and pride, and anger, and an unbroken will, take him apart and, like Thomas Halyburton's mother, pray both with him and for him. Pray importunately that your child also may be made of God, both to Him and to you, a twin-brother of the Holy Child Jesus. Pray without ceasing that your child may be sanctified with the self-same sanctification as Mary's Child. And if that may not be perfected all at once, as His sanctification was, pray that at least it may be begun as long as you are here to see it and to have a hand in it. Take your child apart, as long as he is docile and will go with you, and ask on your knees, and in his hearing, something like this—'O God, the God and Father of the Holy Child Jesus, make this, my dear child, a child of God with Him. And after I am gone make him and keep him a man of God like Him.' Take no rest yourself, and give God no rest, till you see a seed of God not only sown in your child's heart, but till you see him, as Mary saw her first-born Son, subject to her in everything in her house at home, and growing up every day in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man.

III

THE CIRCUMCISION AND THE NAMING OF THE HOLY CHILD

LUKE ii. 21

CIRCUMCISION was the first sacrament that ever was instituted in the Church, and Abraham and Ishmael were the first receivers of that immensely significant sacrament. Circumcision had exactly the same significance in the Old Testament that Baptism has in the New Testament. Only, circumcision was immensely more significant of the extent and the intensity of our sin and uncleanness, and of our universal and urgent need of the removal of all our sin and uncleanness. Our New Testament ordinance of baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and nothing could well be more significant than that. But the Old Testament ordinance was a washing with blood. No sacrament could possibly signify and seal more than our ingrafting into Christ, and our engagement to be the Lord's. But the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision represented, sealed, and applied all that in an immensely more poignant and impressive way.

It was an ordinance in Israel that every manchild must be circumcised on the eighth day. But this is not an ordinary manchild like all the other menchildren of the house of Abraham; this is not an Ishmael, nor even an Isaac. This is that Manchild of whom the angel spake to Mary: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' And the Son of God has no need for our circumcision, as all other children born of women have need. There is nothing unclean, either in His body or in His soul, for the circumcising knife to cleanse away. No remotest taint of our original and universal corruption has ever touched, or ever will touch, this Holy Thing. He will be in all points tempted like as we are, yet always without sin. He will never be drawn away of His own lust, and enticed. He will always and everywhere keep His garments clean. For He that is begotten of God keepeth Himself, and that wicked one toucheth Him not. Well may His name be called Wonderful!

But the half of His wonderfulness has not yet been told. For He who knew no sin, and who never was to know sin, was already in His circumcision made sin for us. He was not so much as eight days in this world till he began to be numbered with transgressors. Mary's firstborn son was a lamb without blemish and without spot, but before He was a week old, He began to

bear the sins of many. Look at that Holy Thing but a span long and already made a sacrifice for sin and for uncleanness not His own! And as He began in the temple that day, so He continued every day to lead a life of pain, and shame, and blood-shedding, for us and for our children, till He finished on the cross the sin-atoning work His Father had given Him to do. And ever after that first day of His wounding for our transgressions, that Holy Thing bore in His body the marks of our redemption. As John Milton sings concerning the circumcision :—

> He who with all Heaven's heraldry whilere
> Entered this world, now bleeds to give us ease.
> Alas! how soon our sin
> Sore doth begin
> His infancy to seize!
> But, oh! ere long
> Huge pangs and strong
> Will pierce more near His heart.

And as another sings :—

> Hath He marks to lead me to Him
> If He be my Guide?
> In His hands and feet are wound-prints,
> And His side.

But with all that we do not see the full manifoldness of circumcision till Paul, as usual, takes it up. Of all the prophets and all the apostles it is Paul who makes the most spiritual and the most impressive use of this most pungent of all divine ordinances. Speaking of himself and of his own spiritual experiences in one of his price-

less autobiographic passages the apostle says—'Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews. But what things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ.' And beginning with that autobiographical and evangelical reference, Paul proceeds elsewhere and goes down to the real root and original intention of circumcision, both in the Old Testament economy, and then in Christ Himself, and then in us. Writing to the Romans, and having occasion to mention circumcision, he says this about it: 'For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.' And to the Galatians, who were seeking to be justified by their being circumcised, the Apostle writes: 'Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.' And to the Colossians: 'Beware lest any man spoil you after the traditions of men, and not after Christ. In whom ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.' Made without the hands of men, he means; but made with the hands and with the knives of the Holy Ghost. With all that, you

will see, my brethren, how deep the knife of circumcision cuts, both in Abraham, and in Christ, and in ourselves. And you will justify the divine ordinance in Israel which was published abroad in these severe terms. 'This is My covenant which ye shall keep, between Me and you, and your seed after you; every manchild among you shall be circumcised. And the uncircumcised manchild shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant.' Every father in Israel, in the first days of that holy covenant, had to perform the ordinance of circumcision with his own hands on all his sons. Every father had to be the priest in his own house, on the pain of death. All of which is written for our learning, and for our imitation. For we who are fathers are first to see and to feel in ourselves the meaning and the need of all that cleansing which circumcision teaches and enjoins. Then we are to understand clearly and joyfully all that the circumcision of the Holy Child means, and all that it offers to us and to our children; and then we are to pray and work continually till the blood of His eighth day is sprinkled both on the bodies and on the souls of all our children, and at all their ages, from their first infancy unto their full manhood. We are to be like Sir Thomas Browne's father, who used to kneel beside his child's cradle and pray that the heart of his child might already, and always, be a temple of the Holy Ghost. And it was so. And it will be so to us, and to our children also, if we ask it.

But, even with all that, the whole of that great day's work in the temple is by no means completed. Our homely-minded people are not so far wrong when they say that the minister is to give such and such a child his name on the day of his baptism. At anyrate that was the way of it in ancient Israel. No child of Abraham ever got his name till after he was circumcised. As the first naming of John the Baptist shows us, and the first naming of Jesus Christ. 'And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.' 'Now, *nomen omen*,' says John Donne; 'for scarce any man hath a name but that name is legal to him. His name always remembers him of some rules and laws of his actions.' And again—'*Nomina debita.* Our names are debts that we owe to those who know our name. Every man owes to himself and to others the signification of his name, and of all his names. Every new addition of name, or of office, or of honour, lays a new debt and a new obligation on a man.' I for one feel that the great preacher has done both his Master and me a great service in the way he has put the truth about our Lord in that fine sermon of his. To put an all-important truth in a fresh and unfamiliar way is to do us an immense service. And it is a quickening and a refreshing thing to me to be told that this new name of the Son of God lays Him under a new debt to me, over and above all His other debts, say, as a faithful Creator.

This new name that the angel gave to Joseph and Mary to give to their Child on the day of His circumcision lays Him under this debt to me, to save me from my sins. 'To save His people,' as the scripture literally has it. Till the only doubt, the only question is—Am I one of His people? Does that limitation of His name shut me out, or does it open and let me in? That, my brethren, is the one question now for you and for me. Are we, ay or no, among His people? Well; we are, if we wish to be. We are; if we are willing to be. We are; if we are willing to be made willing to be. We are; if we are sincerely seeking, in any true sense, to be saved from our sins. Now let us be quite clear about that. Absolutely plain-spoken and straightforward about that with ourselves. For God is not mocked. Let us name to Him then at least one sin from which we would fain be saved on the spot. Even one, and all the rest will follow. Even one, to give reality and point to the text. Even one unclean thing. Even one iniquitous thing. Some one great sin that is past through the forbearance of God. But a sin that sometimes comes back on us with such a tremendous blow on our conscience. But more especially, what is your besetting sin at the present moment? It would be like cutting off your right hand, and plucking out your right eye, to have your besetting sin taken away. But it must be done. For it is better to enter into life hewn all over with the knives of purity and of truth and of self-

denial, than to face death and judgment as you now are. But though all that is true; this is rather the proper truth of the text. This, that whatever your past has been, and whatever your present is, in the matter of sin; and whatever your fear for the future, that name which the Son of God took to Himself in the temple that day; His best known and His best loved name, lays Him under an absolute obligation to save you from all your sins. He must deny both His circumcision and His circumcision name, and all His errand here, if He does not save you from all your sins. But He is not ashamed to bear that name, both on earth and in heaven, because He has never turned His back on any seeking sinner, and never will. This comes into my mind at this moment, and my own heart leaps up to receive it —That He is able and willing to save to the uttermost. So that, if you and I are the uttermost of all sinners; far out and away beyond all other sinners; I beyond you, and you beyond me; yet He is both able and willing to save both of us, and that from all our sins. But at the same time, I must take care not to exaggerate, or in any way over-state the truth, either to you or to myself. For His salvation from sin is strictly limited to His people. And then, even to them, there is this limitation also, to which they must all submit. He does not say just when, and just where, and just in what way, He will save us from all our sins. Times, and seasons, and instrumentalities, must all be left in His hand. Rome was not built

in a day. Neither is our salvation, within and without, and from all our sins, finished in a day or in a year. But what of that, if only the thing is sure some day; some year. And there is nothing in heaven or on earth that is so sure. He has sworn, and He will perform it in His own time and in His own way. And till He performs it fully and finally His will is that we keep calling on His name continually; day and night, remembering ourselves and Him of His circumcision and our salvation name. We are always to call Him by this His best name, and not to faint till He avenges us speedily. For myself, I find these ways of calling continually on His name very consoling to my soul and in every way helpful. At one time I will hail Him in these words:—

> Jesus! Name of mercy mild,
> Given to the Holy Child
> When the cup of human woe
> First He tasted here below.

I read of His circumcision, and in imagination I place myself present at His circumcision, and find that that verse already begins to save me from my sins. And, then, thinking of you all when alone, and of all His people everywhere, I speak in your name and say this:—

> Jesus is the name we treasure,
> Name beyond what words can tell,
> Name of gladness, name of pleasure,
> Ear and heart delighting well:
> Name of sweetness passing measure,
> Saving us from death and hell.

And, then this, I feel sure, is in your own mouth, and in your own heart all the day:—

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
  In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
  And drives away his fear.

Dear Name! The Rock on which I build,
  My Shield and Hiding-Place,
My never-failing Treasury, filled
  With boundless stores of grace.

Jesus! My Shepherd, Husband, Friend,
  My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,—
  Accept the praise I bring.

All you then who are His people; all you who would fain be found among His people—and who would not?—dwell day and night upon every word of that; even as your sins dwell day and night in you. Lean your whole weight day and night upon His saving name. Make His saving name in all its debts and obligations to you, make it your prayer and your praise, absolutely without ceasing. And mix up His name with prayers and apostrophes of your own like this. O Lord Jesus! say. For the sake of that name that was given Thee at Thy circumcision, when Thy sin-cleansing blood was first shed for sinners; for the sake of that name that was written over Thy cross; that name which a multitude that no man can number have pled, and have never pled in vain, before the mercy-seat; for Thy name sake, Lord Jesus, save me from all my sins. For Thy

name sake, pardon and cleanse away all mine iniquity, for it is very great.

> Foul, I to the fountain fly;
> Wash me, Saviour, or I die!

And shall He not avenge His own people, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

IV

THE GROWTH OF THE HOLY CHILD IN STATURE AND IN SPIRIT

LUKE ii. 40 and 52

'AND the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him.' These words contain and cover what was, in some respects, the most important period of our Lord's life. For these words contain and cover that all-important period of His earthly life during which His intellectual and moral and spiritual character was first formed. When the early years of any child's life are neglected, and wasted, and mismanaged, all the after years of that child's life are bound in shallows and in miseries. But our Lord's whole earthly life escaped all our stagnations, and all our shipwrecks, because it was, as we may say, so well steered in the tides of His youth.

Now, to begin with, 'the child grew.' As the evangelist says again, 'Jesus increased in stature.' I think I am safe in saying that this exactest of writers would never have said about the youth of our Lord what he does say, and says over again, unless he had had before his

mind's eye the figure of a young man conspicuous among His fellows for His stateliness and His strength. The sacred writer tells us that he had the most perfect understanding of the very beginnings of our Lord's life, because he had himself seen, and had interrogated with a view to his gospel, the most trusty eye-witnesses of our Lord's childhood, and boyhood, and youth. Till in this text we ourselves become as good as eye-witnesses of the laying of the first foundation stones of our Lord's whole subsequent life, and character, and work. And the very first foundation stone of them all was laid in that body which the Holy Ghost prepared for our Lord as the *instrumentum Deitatis*; the organ and the instrument of His Godhead. You may depend upon it that a writer like Luke would never have repeatedly expressed himself, as he has here repeatedly expressed himself, about the growth and the stature of our Lord's body, if our Lord's bodily presence had been weak, as was the case, to some extent, with the apostle Paul. In his famous essay on 'Decision of Character,' John Foster has a most striking passage on the matter in hand. Decision of Character, the great essayist argues, beyond all doubt, depends very much on the constitution of the body. There is some quality in the bodily organisation of some men, which increases, if it does not create, both the stability of their resolutions and the energy of their undertakings and endeavours. There is something in some men's very bodies, which, like the ligatures that the Olympic

wrestlers bound on their hands and on their arms, braces up the very powers of their mind. Men of a strong moral character will, as a rule, be found to possess something correspondingly strong in their very bodies; just as massive engines demand to have their stand taken on a firm foundation. 'Accordingly,' says Foster, 'it will be found that those men who have been remarkable among their fellows for the decisiveness of their characters, and for the success of their great endeavours, have, as a rule, been the possessors of great constitutional strength. Till the body has become the inseparable companion and the fit co-worker with the mind.' It is an ancient proverb—*Mens sana in corpore sano;* a sound mind in a sound body; a stately mind and character in a corresponding bodily stature.

'And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.' You have as much understanding yourselves in all these matters as any of your teachers. Well, then, what exactly would you understand if it was said to you about some youth in the family, or in the school, or in the office, or in the workshop, that he grew and waxed strong in spirit? Would you not at once make a picture to yourself of a lad full of life, full of feeling, and full of sensibility. Quick-witted, as we say; high-mettled, as we say; full of courage, and of a warm heart. You would see before yourself a keen-minded, intelligent, affectionate, sparkling-eyed youth. Well, all that undoubtedly enters into the evangelist's intention as he sets this strong-

spirited child, called Jesus, before his readers. There is nothing supernatural here. The successive features that Luke here lays down as belonging to our Lord's early days are not at all impossible to your own children to imitate and to which to attain. There is nothing here that might not be said with the most perfect truth about one of your own eminently intelligent, and eminently warm-hearted sons. As a matter of fact, the very same thing is said to the letter about Elizabeth's son also. 'And the child grew,' writes Luke about the young Baptist also, 'and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel.' Only, no doubt; indeed, to a certainty, there was in Mary's son a strength of spirit, and a keenness of feeling, and a quickness of response to everything that was honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report that was not seen in the same degree in the youthful Baptist, nor will be seen in your very best sons. And all that was so, because it was His Father's purpose that in the stature of His body, and in the strength of His spirit, as well as in everything else, this Holy Child was to be the first Adam over again. As far as these things went Paradise was restored in Nazareth, as long as Mary and her first-born son lived in that favoured town. And, as Adam would have been the first father of a whole world full of such strong-spirited children, had he stood in his first estate; even so, the second Adam had now come to

restore, and in these things also, what He took not away.

And, then, that is a delightfully well-chosen word, He 'waxed strong in spirit.' That is to say, just as He grew in the number of His years, and in the stateliness of His bodily presence, so He waxed strong in His spirit; in the endowments of His mind, and in the affections of His heart. There was not one atom of what we censure as precocity and prematurity about the Holy Child. Not one atom. At eight days old, He was just what an eight days old child should be. And at twelve years old, He was just what a twelve, or, say, sixteen years old lad should be. Take Him at any year of His life you like, and He was neither a year younger, nor a year older, than that. When He was a child, He spake as a child, He understood as a child, He thought as a child. And it was only when He became a man that He put away childish things. There was first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. And it was not till the fruit was brought forth, that the sickle was put in, because the harvest was come.

'Filled with wisdom.' You will yourselves have remarked and meditated on this; how it is not said that He was filled with knowledge, or with learning, or with great talents, or with great promise of great eloquence, though all that would have been true, in the measure of His years. But wisdom is far better than all these things taken together. Wisdom is the principal thing, says the wise man,

therefore get wisdom. Knowledge is good; knowledge is absolutely necessary. But, then, knowledge so often puffs up; but never wisdom. Wisdom always edifies. He grew in knowledge, you may be sure, every day. He passed no day without learning something He did not know yesterday. He listened and paid attention when old men spake. He attended with all His might to His lessons in day-school and in Sabbath-school. He read every good book He could lay His hands on. He went up as His custom was to the Synagogue every Sabbath day. And, then, all that was turned on the spot into wisdom to Him; like water turned into wine. Everything He learned in His head, straightway descended into His heart, and then out of His heart were the issues of His wise, and holy, and heavenly life. 'And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the Synagogue; and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him?' When the same thing was asked at the wisest man in another dispensation, he answered them that if they had given their hearts wholly up to wisdom, as he had done, she would have come and dwelt in their hearts as well as in his heart. And our Wise Man made much the same answer when He said, My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me. And if any man will do His will that man also shall know of the doctrine. The Holy Child had this greatest of all happiness that His heart always

turned instinctively to know and to do His Father's will. Whatsoever things were true, whatsoever things were honest, whatsoever things were just, whatsoever things were pure, whatsoever things were lovely, and of good report, He instinctively and immediately thought of those things. That was His whole wisdom both as a child and as a youth. And He grew every day in that wisdom, till He was filled with that wisdom every day. The light of wisdom that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, lighted up this young man's whole inner life with a clearness, and with a strength, and with a beauty, that all ended in making Him the Light of the world. He was so full of wisdom that His Father, for His reward, has taken Him and has made Him of God to us our wisdom, as well as our righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

All that makes us think shame at our own folly. What born fools we have all been! And what incurable fools we still are! How foolish is so much of our walk and conversation to this day! How ashamed we continually are at the things we daily do, and at the words we daily speak! Foolishness is bound up in our heart from a child, even as wisdom was bound up in Jesus' heart. We have plenty of talents, and plenty of knowledge, and plenty of learning, and plenty of eloquence; it is in wisdom that we are all so bankrupt. So bankrupt that all our other gifts and possessions are lost upon us for want of wisdom to direct us in them. We are ever learn-

ing at great outlay, but we are never coming to that knowledge of the truth that is the end of all learning. Our very learning is fatal to us, if it is alone, as it so often is. It lands us continually in the ditches of life, because the eye, and the hand, and the heart of wisdom do not lead us in the road of life. How common a thing is all learning, and all knowledge, and all eloquence; and how rare a thing is a little wisdom to direct them! How few men among our great men are wise men! Really wise men. How few among our own relations and friends are really wise men. If you have one wise man in your family, or in the whole circle of your friendship, grapple that man to your heart with a hook of gold.

'And the grace of God was upon Him.' 'Even in the Scriptures,' says Clement, 'the distinction of names and things breeds great light in the soul.' Now, you are to make a careful distinction here. You are not to think of 'grace' here in its ordinary evangelical acceptation. But there is no fear, surely, of your making that mistake here. You think every day and every hour of God's grace to you as the chief of sinners. And though our Lord thought without ceasing of the grace of God that had come to Him; it was not the same kind of grace as that is which has come to you. The grace of God has come to you bringing salvation. But the Saviour of men did not for Himself need salvation. More than one kind of grace came to Him, first and last. But not

among them all the grace that has come so graciously to you. And it breeds great light on the kind of grace that came to the Holy Child when we turn from the fortieth verse of this chapter to the fifty-second verse, and there read that He increased in *favour* with God and man. The true sense here is the same as when a voice came from heaven to the Jordan, and elsewhere, and said: This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 'The good pleasure of God was upon Him,' that would be the best way to render the text. And not only was the grace, and the favour, and the good pleasure of God upon the Holy Child and the Holy Man, but for thirty years it was the same with all men also. No child, no boy, no lad, no young man, in all Galilee was in such universal favour; was so popular, and so universally beloved for thirty years as was Jesus of Nazareth. And no wonder. It could not have been otherwise. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to the four evangelists, not to dwell at any length on the early life and character of our Lord. But we do not much miss that omission of theirs. No reader of theirs, with a spark of love and imagination, needs one syllable more than he has in the text to set his mind to think and his heart to burn. He went about doing good every day of his life. Paul said in a hyperbole that as touching the law he himself was blameless. But it was literally true, and was no hyperbole, of his Master, Jesus of Nazareth. He did no sin against God or man.

Neither was there any youthful folly in His snow-white life to break any father's or mother's heart. And so on, till the evangelist sums up the days of our Lord's youth with these so beautiful words—And in favour with God and man.

V

THE CHILD JESUS SITTING IN THE MIDST OF THE DOCTORS BOTH HEARING THEM, AND ASKING THEM QUESTIONS

LUKE ii. 41-51

A YOUNG child's life ripens far faster in the East than in the West. A child is still a child with us when he would already be quite a grown-up lad with them. And a mere lad with us would already be quite a grown-up young man with them. And thus it is that when the Child Jesus is said to have been twelve years old, we are intended to think of a young man of sixteen or seventeen years of age among ourselves. And then it is not so much the evangelist who calls Jesus a child: it is rather the Child's mother who still uses that mother-like word. The sacred writer takes down the word from the living lips of the Child's mother. 'Our Child,' was the very word that Mary still used as she told the sacred writer all the things about the angel, and about her husband, and about herself, and about her Child, that she had kept hidden in her heart for so long. Jesus remained a child to His mother long after He had ceased to be a child,

either to Himself or to any one else, but to His mother. Certainly He was no longer speaking as a child or thinking as a child when He sat among the astonished doctors in the temple that day. And Mary had kept in her heart all the things she saw and heard her Child say and do in the temple that day, till she opened all her heart to the third evangelist in her fast-ripening old age. All this temple-scene, as Calvin says, would have faded before long from the memories of men, had not Mary laid it all up in her heart, to bring it out long afterwards, along with other treasures of the same kind, for the enriching of all men who should afterwards read her marvellous story.

But with all that there was one thing in Joseph and in Mary that passover-week that always greatly amazes me. Why did they not proceed to the temple at once when they returned back to the city to seek for their child? I cannot imagine what could have been in their thoughts. Had any of you, who are fathers, been in Joseph's place that week, and had any of you who are mothers, been in Mary's place that week, what would you have done? I think I can answer for you as to what you would have done. You would have gone straight to the temple, would you not? You would have said to one another as you hastened back to the city—'Let us go first of all to the temple to look for our child. He is sure to be still tarrying there. For He was absolutely possessed with the temple, and with all that He saw and heard in the temple. Early every morning

He was waiting at the posts of the temple doors, and we could not get Him to turn His back on its closed gates at night. There is no use in our seeking for our child anywhere else. Come, let us go at once to the temple.' So, I feel sure, you would have said. And why Joseph and Mary did not say that and do that I cannot imagine. To be three whole days, searching the whole city up and down sorrowing, and never once to think of going to the temple—it quite baffles me to think what the parents of the child could have had in their thoughts all those three sorrowing days. It is a mystery to me, the more I think of it.

'And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.' There is a passage in Isaac Walton's *Life of Hooker* that always comes to my mind when I think of the Child Jesus and His questions and answers in the temple. 'Mr. Richard Hooker's speech was always of a great earnestness, and of humble gravity. And it was observed that at his being a schoolboy he was an early questionist, and quietly inquisitive. Why was this? And why was that? And why was that not? Why this was granted? And why that was denied? This being mixed with a remarkable modesty, and a sweet, serene quietness of nature, made his master and others to believe him to have an inward, blessed, divine light, and therefore to consider him a little wonder.' Those who have read what Richard

Hooker grew up to write, will not wonder at the best things that even Isaac Walton can write about Hooker's childhood. But to come back to the temple. What do you think would be the subject of those questions and answers of the young Christ that so astonished the doctors that day? Did it ever occur to you to stop in your private reading of this passage, or in your family worship, and ask yourself, and ask your children, what some of those questions and answers of His in the temple that day would to a certainty be? You may not have the time to stop and enter into these things with your children. But there is a class of men among us who are enabled and enjoined to give all their time and all their thoughts to nothing else but to such inquiries as these. I refer to that elect, and honourable, and enviable class of men that we call students of New Testament exegesis. Surely they are the happiest and the most enviable of all men, who have been set apart to nothing else but to the understanding and the opening up of the hid treasures of God's Word and God's Son.

But it is not our so-called New Testament students only who have understandings to be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ and imaginations to be sanctified. We must all be New Testament students in these respects. And we must all imitate our Great Example, and continually, and as long as we need knowledge, ask unceasing questions. But then it is not enough simply to ask unceasing questions, because we all

do that already. We all do little else but that. Large parts of our time and our thoughts are taken up with little else but the asking and the answering of questions. For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing. But of what nature were the new things that so interested and occupied the Athenians? And of what nature are the questions and the answers that most interest and most occupy you and me? To what world of things does our curiosity for the most part run out? Just what are the new things that from day to day and from hour to hour most kindle our interest and most whet our curiosity? What, for instance, is the nature of the books we are so eager to buy or to borrow as soon as they are announced? What newspapers, and conducted in what interest, do we rush to read every day and every week? And what pages in our newspapers do we devour with such hunger? And what other pages in them do we never open? Let me answer to myself such questions as these and I will not need to ask any more questions as to what my character is and my worth. What is my curiosity so much set upon? What kind of questions do I most frequently and most eagerly put? And what answers do most delight and astonish me with their truth and their wisdom? And to what doctors do I betake myself to sit among them till those who seek me will always find me sitting in the midst of them? O my

soul, above all other earthly knowledge, know thyself!

Plutarch, in his masterpiece-parallel, is very proud of the child Alexander. How when the Persian ambassadors came to his father's court the young prince put no childish questions to them, nor talked to them about trifling matters. He showed no interest in their golden vine, nor in their hanging gardens, nor in the way they dressed and crowned their kings. All Alexander's questions were directed to the distance and the size of their country, the nature of their great roads, and how they had carried their great roads up into the high countries of Asia. And just what power their crowned kings had, and what power their great princes had, and what power their people had. As also how their king bore himself to his enemies after they were subdued, as well as to all his neighbours round about. Till, so Plutarch tells us, the ambassadors were astonished above measure at the maturity and the wisdom and the statesmanship and the soldiership of the young prince. And till I do not wonder that Dr. Field, the great New Testament exegete, dwells delightedly on the illustrative parallel that obtains to him between our Lord's wise and ripe childhood and that of Alexander the Great. The young prince of Macedonia was already beginning to lay the foundations of his future greatness by the way in which he so rose above all childish things, and already showed, as his proud biographer says, his noble mind and his determination one day to

attempt great enterprises. And what great enterprises were already possessing our Prince's noble mind, we would see if we were able to recover and to realise some of the questions and answers that He addressed to Himself and to the doctors in the temple that day. Questions and answers that enraptured those doctors even more than those questions did that the young Alexander addressed to the Persian ambassadors as they sat at his father's table.

'A wise question,' says Bacon, 'is already half the answer.' And it was the wisdom of the Child's questions that so enlightened and so impressed all who sat by and heard Him that day. If you take time and look well at the text you will see in it this remarkable and arresting thing, —the text, with all its exactness, and with all its circumstantiality, does not say that the doctors asked any questions at the Child Jesus. But the text distinctly and emphatically says that the Child gave to somebody's questions that day the wisest and the most astonishing answers. Now what can all that mean but just this that Bacon says? What can it all mean but just this that the Holy Child became both questioner and answerer Himself that day? What can it mean but just this that His questions were so wise that they more than half answered themselves? Yes; this must be the true exegesis of this enigmatical passage, that the Child Jesus framed His questions so wisely and so well that before such and such a question was fully stated, the true answer to it

had already risen in the Child's own mind and heart, and in the minds and the hearts of all who heard Him. Yes; that was it; that must have been it. And from that let us all aim henceforth at imitating our youthful Lord in this fine feature of His early self-education also. Let us frame all our questions, and all our other inquiries, with such wisdom, and with such love of the truth, as that all our wise questions also shall be more than half their own wise answers.

And Bacon is such a wise and such a fruitful questioner and answerer himself, that once we open his books we can scarcely lay them down again. The honourablest part of a debate, or of a conversation, he says, is to put in a question so as to moderate the debate and to lead the dance. Now if you will observe you will see the wisdom of these words of his every day and in every company of conversing and contending men. For nothing is more honourable surely than to be able to turn the stream of dishonourable talk by a new question skilfully cast into the angry current. A new question so stated as to lead the dance to a new tune, and to direct it into a new direction, is a question quite worthy of being ranked with our Lord's so wise and so timeous questions themselves. Such divine wisdom is there, and such divine worth, in a well-planned and a well-planted question. Watch your opportunity then and be ready. Watch for the honourablest part of the talk, and be ready to take it. Never let the talk, or the contention, or any kind of conversation

whatever, run long in an evil channel, if you can help it. Have a question or some other moderating remark ready that will both interest and carry captive your company to wisdom and to love. And by so doing you will both save yourself from many wounds and many remorses, as well as so save those who have the happiness to sit beside you.

VI

ABOUT HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

LUKE ii. 49

THE forty-ninth verse of the second chapter of Luke's Gospel should be printed in letters of gold a finger deep. For that absolutely priceless verse has preserved to us the very first words that ever fell from the youthful lips of our Lord. He speaks only once till He is thirty years old, and this rich text tells us what He said. And our Lord's first recorded words are words of an immense significance and an immense importance. Among many other things these first recorded words of our Lord tell us that it was on the occasion of His first passover that the Holy Child first began to realise Who He was and on what errand He had been sent into this world. I may be quite wrong in my interpretation of these weighty first words of our youthful Lord; but to my mind it is the next thing to a certainty that God first began to reveal His Son in the Holy Child during the preparation, and the self-examination, and the attainments, and the enjoyments, connected with His first passover. The Holy Child came up to

Jerusalem the son of Joseph and Mary; He went down to Nazareth the Son of God. Not that His whole Messiahship was wholly and down to the bottom revealed to Him during those seven passover days. And much less His whole Divine Sonship. For it took every hour of another eighteen years to make perfect to Him the tremendous revelation of His whole Divine Sonship. His Divine and Eternal Sonship was such a tremendous revelation that it was not completely and for ever apprehended by our incarnate Lord till the Holy Ghost was poured out without measure upon Him eighteen years after this on the occasion of His baptism at the Jordan. At the same time, as I believe, His Father began that tremendous revelation in the Holy Child when He was deep among the ordinances and the experiences of His first passover-week in Jerusalem.

'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' There was both sorrow and anger in His mother's reproof, and there was both pain and shame in her Son's reply. He was both pained and ashamed that His mother should say such things to Him in such a place and at such a season, and He did not seek to hide the shame and the pain that He felt. It was something not unlike this among yourselves. Suppose your eldest son come to years of discretion and become a young communicant. And suppose him wholly

taken up with the occupations and the experiences of his first communion. And suppose on your missing him from home you went to seek for him in a football field, or at a bicycle tournament, or at some military display, or in some non-churchgoing friend's house, during the hours of the preparatory or thanksgiving services. And not finding him in any of those places you came and broke out on him at the Church door—what shame and what pain he could not fail to feel. That you, his mother, and a communicant yourself, should so misunderstand and should so reprehend your young-communicant son. It had not been the first time that His mother had so wounded the Holy Child with her want of understanding and sympathy, and it would not be the last time. But there was something specially painful to her son in this present outbreak of His mother at such a time and in such a place. As soon as Moses' law would let them, Joseph and Mary cut the communion season short, and set out for home as fast as they could. But their Son, happy as He was at home, had during that passover-week discovered another home in which He was happier still, and which He could not bring Himself easily to leave. He felt as if He could dwell in His Father's House in Jerusalem all the days of His life. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God. For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.

'About My Father's business,' He said, dwelling on the word. And no wonder. For there had never been, and there never would be, an-

other business of His Father's at all to compare with this business on which He now begins to be engaged. First and last, the Son of God will have His hand in many great businesses of His Father's, but there will never be another business like this. As the divine and eternal Son of His Father He had carried through many great undertakings already; and both on earth and in heaven He will carry through many more. But this present undertaking on which He is just entering is by far the greatest and grandest business of them all. Almighty, and full of all manner of resources, as the Son of God always was, He could not attempt this present business till He was first made flesh. No nor till He was first made sin. All the other businesses He had performed for His Father had cost Him nothing, but this new business burdened Him, and humbled Him, and straitened Him, and gave Him no rest, till it was accomplished. One here, and one there, up and down this house, will have some idea of what that business was, and what it would cost the Son of God to carry it through. Yes; you are right; it was your sin that was His Father's terrible business with His Son. It is my sinfulness that gives me the right key into this text to-night, and it is your sinfulness that enables you to understand what I am trying to say. He might have been found holidaying it up and down among His kinsfolk and acquaintance all that week, like the rest, had it not been for your sinfulness and mine. You are to be congratu-

lated indeed on your great sinfulness. The simple truth is, Joseph and Mary had not sinfulness enough, nor enough of the sense of sin to understand God's present business with His Son. But you, by His grace, know better. You know what that business was that had brought Him into this world, and what had now brought Him up to that prophetical passover. *Beata Culpa!* You may well make that exclamation over your great sinfulness, since it has brought you into step with the Son of God in His execution of His Father's favourite business, and since it has given you such a share in that favourite and fruitful business of theirs. And then when that business of the Father's and the Son's and yours is finished, both in Him and in you, you will then be able to visit all your kinsfolk and all your acquaintance in the New Jerusalem at your holy leisure, and will have time to tell them what both the Father and the Son have done for your soul.

'Wist ye not?'—He said in His deep distress at the unreasonable behaviour of Joseph and Mary that passover-week. It was the utter and inexcusable unreasonableness of His mother's behaviour to Him that so hurt and so humbled Him. A little consideration would surely have directed her steps straight to the temple to seek for her son there, and there alone. And having found Him in the temple a very little consideration would surely have restrained her from the precipitate words with which she assailed Him. If she had taken a little time to think of it the utter un-

reasonableness of her conduct could not but have struck her and made her ashamed of herself. To take the very lowest ground, it was not reasonable to think that the youthful Christ should hurry away from the passover ordinances at the earliest possible moment, and should spend His time gadding about up and down the city. It was but common sense, and sound reason, as well as ordinary piety, in Him to do as He had done. 'The different magnitude of things is their reason to me,' says William Law. And it was because His Father's business was already beginning to be a matter of such immense magnitude to our Lord that He felt so acutely the unreasonableness and the injustice of His mother's treatment of that business and of Him that day. And in all that He teaches us also that if our mere reason were only but sound; if we but gave our wholly sane minds to the different magnitudes of things, that of itself would secure the salvation of our souls. Reason itself, He as good as says here, would never let us wander from the way of our salvation, nor would let us stop short of our Father's house, nor ever leave it. Only be reasonable men, He as good as says to us, and you will end in being saved men.

Both Joseph and Mary were speechless as soon as the Holy Child let them see how full of folly their conduct had been and how much they had misunderstood Him and hurt Him. They had treated Him as if He had taken the passover much too seriously. They found fault with Him

for His devotion to His Father's business, and they uttered aloud their complaint and grievance with Him before the whole temple. They said it till the astonished doctors heard them, that He should have been home in Nazareth by this time, and back at His proper work. The lamb had been slain, they said, and its blood had been sprinkled on them and on Him for another year, —let Him come away home then, like all His kinsfolk and acquaintances. And if we will only look well we will see ourselves in all that as in a glass. For we are Joseph and Mary over again in all that. We also treat our Redeemer as if He had been religious overmuch in the dreadful business of our redemption. We treat Him and His redemption of our souls as if He had taken us and our sins far too much to heart. Almost as if He had been a martyr by mistake. They did Him the first wrong that week to suppose that He was in that home-hurrying company; and then they still more wronged and wounded Him by the places in which they sought Him; but above all, by their not seeking Him first in His Father's house and about His Father's business. And many of you are wounding your Redeemer and your Judge in the very same way every day. Yes: every day; for every day He is about His Father's business with you. And if He is,—how do you think does your way of spending your days look to Him? Either He is beside Himself or you are. Either He has thrown Himself away or you are doing so. Either His bloodshedding for your

sin is all a misunderstanding and a mistake on His part, or you are making the most tremendous mistake that ever a madman made. I tell you to your face that you are wounding your Redeemer in His tenderest part, for you are treating His sin-atoning blood as if it were a much over-done thing, and a thing that nowadays you as good as repudiate; it is a thing to explain away, and to advertise yourself out of all doctrinal and confessional and pulpit connection with it. Yes, I tell you, and with the most certain truth before it comes to pass, that one wounded and offended and angry look of your Judge; one glance of the wrath of the Lamb at your present conduct, will freeze your very marrow on that day, and will make you curse the day that saw you born. 'In that dread and awful day,' prayed Andrewes day and night, 'rescue and save me, and let me never see my Judge's face overcast as He looks at me in His anger!'

VII

HE WENT DOWN WITH THEM AND WAS SUBJECT UNTO THEM

LUKE ii. 51

OF all the Ten Commandments it was the Fifth that was the best observed and the best fulfilled in the house of Israel. Of all the beautiful pictures of patriarchal life that have been preserved to us none are more beautiful than the pictures of parental love and solicitude on the one hand, and the pictures of filial love and honour on the other hand. The tie between parent and child was much closer and was more lasting in those days than would be either possible or desirable in our day. But altogether apart from the primitive and temporary forms that this natural relation and this divine precept took on in the patriarchal and post-patriarchal communities, the parental love and care, and the corresponding reverence and obedience, in the households of Israel are an example to us to all time.

In the consecutive order of the Decalogue the honour of our parents comes in after the honour

and worship of God. But in the order of nature, and in actual life, the fifth commandment is the first fulfilled. A child's father is much more than his mere father to him. His father is both his father and his god to every child. A little child cannot rise above his father, he cannot see beyond his father. To every child his father is the man of all men to him on earth or in heaven. There is nothing his father cannot do for him, if he pleases. There is no strength, no resource, no nobleness, no wisdom, with which every child's own father is not endowed. The young heart that will yet rise to the love and the adoration of its Father in heaven, for a long time knows Him only by His paternoster name. And in all this 'earthly fathers learn their craft from God.' For God, for a long time, clothes every father on earth with all His own attributes and prerogatives and duties and dues. The divine throne, the divine sceptre, the divine sword, are all as good as made over into every man's hand into whose house a little child is born.

It is supposed by some, and the supposition is not without a certain ground to go upon, that Joseph died while Jesus was still increasing in stature of body and in strength of spirit. Bengel believes that about this time Mary was left an impoverished widow, and that Jesus and His brothers and sisters were left orphans, and were left altogether unprovided for. And as a consequence that special cares and special responsibilities and special labours were all from that time laid on the heart

and on the hands of Mary's eldest son. We are not told. But reverent thought and adoring realisation have never been rebuked nor sent away without their proper reward. Whether Joseph was permitted to see his children attain to their full manhood and womanhood or no, we cannot tell. But in any case we cannot but think often of Mary, and cannot but picture to ourselves the life of memory and of wonder and of worship and of waiting that her whole remaining life must have been. And all the more if she was left a widow indeed and was left alone with her want and with her own thoughts about it all. But all that it has seemed good to the Holy Ghost to tell us about those eighteen years of our Lord's life in His mother's house is contained within the four corners of our present text. 'And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them : but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.'

It may be taken as a certainty that this so indefatigable evangelist did his very best, and left no stone unturned, as we say, in order to fill up somewhat the long and silent and so mysterious spaces that lie between our Lord's twelfth and His thirtieth years. But with all he could do Luke could collect little or nothing that was trustworthy or that was of much real value. There were not a few people still alive in Nazareth and round about who loved to sit and talk to Luke about Mary and her Child. But it did not come to much. They had really nothing

to tell him beyond the deep and sweet impression that still survived in their aged and astounded hearts. There is really nothing for your neighbours to tell abroad about your dutiful and subject son. His mere obedience to you; his mere subjection to you; his mere filial honour to you, will not do much to fill up an intending biographer's note-book. There is nothing in your retired and happy and peaceful household life to tell to the curious interviewer who stands pen in hand. There are no anecdotes that it would be worth his trouble to put into print. There is nothing dramatic, as we say; there is no such colour nor movement in your family life for the outside world to talk about. 'O yes, there is this,' one of the oldest inhabitants, and the most willing to talk to Luke, would say. 'It was reported in Nazareth in those days that He had said in the temple that He must be about His Father's business. Well; we used to say to one another that that was what He always was in Nazareth also. Joseph's business—I knew Joseph well in those days—it fell wholly into the hands of the eldest son, as is the way with us, and the whole widowed and orphaned house was laid on His shoulders. Six days He laboured with all His might, and did all His work, and the seventh day was always to Him the Sabbath of the Lord His God. In it He never did any work. Yes; another thing I always remember to have heard said,' the aged Nazarene would add—'He sat at the feet of all the older workmen, and took

humble lessons from them, as no one else ever did, just as it was said to us that He had sat at the feet of the old doctors in the temple.' That, and old impressions like that, was literally all that Luke could collect for love or money. Till we have more than one inquiring journey of his summed up in this one entry in his Gospel: 'He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.'

There is no part of the Roman Catholic discipline that appeals to me so much as their doctrine and life of obedience. Their habits of prayer and their vows of obedience take my heart very much. But then, as often as I hanker after those things for myself and for you, these lines of Keble's always come to my mind to correct me—

> We need not bid, for cloistered cell,
> Our neighbour and our work farewell.
> Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
> For sinful man beneath the sky;
>
> The trivial round, the common task,
> Will furnish all we need to ask,—
> Room to deny ourselves, a road
> To bring us daily nearer God.

That is to say, we do not need to leave our own home and to go and seek out some ecclesiastical superior to whom to submit and subject ourselves. We do not need to leave our own fireside for plenty of opportunities and duties and demands to take other people's ways of things and to give up our own way. Our Lord's subjection and submission were made perfect, and were

thus made the pattern of our subjection and submission, just by His living day after day, day after day, for thirty years in the same small house with His mother and His brothers and His sisters. Like ourselves in our homes also, His mother and His brothers and His sisters would all insist that their way was the only right way in this and in that, and that His way was the wrong way. And as far as in Him lay they always got their own way in everything, right or wrong. At any rate His mother always got her way in everything so far as He was concerned. He always submitted to her commands and her wishes, not because she was always wise and right, but because she was His mother. And in like manner He never disputed or fell out with any of His brothers or sisters, because He every day read it on the tables of His own humble heart, not to look every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Follow peace with all men, was His daily meditation every day both at home and abroad. And when His mother's house became divided, as the best houses will sometimes become divided, He would only go away the oftener to secret prayer till He came back saying to Himself, As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men, especially with those of your own mother's household. No. He did not need to enter the Essene monasteries of the Dead Sea in order to practise a meek and a quiet heart, and in order to subject Himself to His superiors.

Neither did Jonathan Edwards need to leave his

father's manse, or his own, and immure himself in a modern monastery. 'No. 46. Resolved: never to allow the least measure of any fretting or uneasiness at my father or mother. Resolved: to suffer no effects of it, so much as in the least alteration of speech, or motion of my eye; and to be specially careful of it with respect to any of our family. No. 47. Resolved: to cultivate assiduously a temper good and universally sweet and benevolent, quiet, peaceable, contented and easy, compassionate and generous, humble and meek, submissive and obliging, and even patient, moderate, forgiving and sincere; and to do at all times, what such a temper would lead me to do; and to examine strictly at the end of every day and every week whether I had so done. Sabbath morning, May 5, 1723.' And Miss Rossetti, whose lot was cast in a very different family life from that of Jonathan Edwards, once wrote these pungent lines on this subject: 'Simple distaste will sometimes vitiate our observance of the Fifth Commandment. Our parents speak, and we wish they would be silent. Their manners are so old-fashioned and their taste is so barbarous. Their opinions are so obsolete. Their standards of things are so childish. They seem to know nothing that is suitable for our new day to know till we habitually take our stand on an attitude of sullen endurance, and of self-defence against them. We are critics and censors and not children. At best we gloomily tolerate what we cannot reform so as to satisfy ourselves.'

'A man is no further holy than he is relatively holy,' writes George Whitefield in his London Journal. Relatively; that is to say in all the several relationships of life. And holy; that is to say full of love in all the relationships of life, and full of all the relationship fruits of love, in kindness, in gentleness, in patience, in toleration, in consideration, in deference, down even, on occasion, to submission and subjection. And how interesting, and how rebuking, and how recovering it is to think we see our Lord no further holy than He was relatively holy. To see Him making and keeping Himself holy as a son, and as a brother, and as a fellow-workman, and as a fellow-worshipper. If I knew all the personal temperaments and all the peculiar tempers of all His brothers and sisters and kinsfolk and acquaintances, I could then undertake to tell you just what new tempers He put on every day and to what holiness of relationship He at last attained. I could then picture to you the great contributions He made every day to the holiness and the happiness and the peace and the good nature and the good humour of His mother's house; ay, and to the houses of all her neighbours round about. But far better than the best reconstruction of Mary's house with her first-born Son in it; let us rather go straight home to-night and begin to reconstruct our own house. And let us begin by imagining Him the eldest Son in our own house and we all in the same house with Him, as His mother and His brothers and His sisters. But better still, let us all go home and henceforth

be that eldest son ourselves. There is plenty of room at home for our Christ-like walk and conversation there. Indeed, some of our houses will soon break up, and forever go to pieces, unless we save both ourselves and them, as Jesus so often saved His mother's house. Let us resolve then on the spot, and where we sit, to go home and do henceforth as He ever did. And indeed it is to enlist us to do that, and it is to guide and support us in doing such Christ-like service at home, that we are here to-night, and are engaged on this so beautiful and so strengthening and so hopeful Scripture. For even hereunto were ye called, because Jesus Christ was made relatively holy for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps. For we were as sheep in all these things going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

VIII

JESUS HIMSELF BEGAN TO BE ABOUT THIRTY YEARS OF AGE

LUKE iii. 23

NOW, why, would you suppose, was our Lord so late in entering upon the proper work of His life? For, thirty years of age in the East is equal to thirty-five or forty years of age with us in the West. And, speaking after the manner of men would that not be looked on as very late in life for any of us to enter on the real work of our life? You may not indulge yourselves in such speculations as these. And I neither praise you nor blame you for that. Only, speaking for myself, I find nothing in this world so entrancing to me as to go back and pay one adoring visit after another to Nazareth, and to think of the thirty years that my Lord spent there, and of what He was doing there all those thirty years. The last three years of His life on earth are far oftener visited by me than the first thirty. But that is because we have so much full and reliable information about our Lord during those three years. At the same time, the very lack of such full and such reliable information

about the foregoing thirty years of our Lord's life on earth gives a fascination to those years to me that carries my heart captive. For, when I take those thirty years and the succeeding three years together, they form to me by far the most fascinating succession of years from the creation of Adam down to the day of judgment. The years of next interest and next importance to me, after my Lord's thirty-three years on earth, are my own now twice His number of earthly years. My own allotted years are, in the nature of things, of the utmost and the most intimate interest and importance to me. At the same time His allotted years, first twelve, then eighteen, and then three, are, out of all measure, more important to me than all my own years. For it had been beyond all words better for me that all my allotted years on earth had been blotted out before they were begun, unless all His years are to be imputed to me, and are to be set down to my account, as having all been undertaken and accomplished for me. Now, since that is so, you will see that it is from no desire to be wise above what is written that I go so often back and tarry so long on those all-important thirty years of my Lord's life on earth. It is with no idle curiosity that I go back to those years of His. It is with the deepest adoration, and with an ever-increasing faith and love and obedience that I so go back. If you have no understanding, and no imagination, and no intellectual and spiritual taste for such things, then you will not join with me to-night in

my meditation which I have made touching those thirty years of my Lord.

1. There are these five things that may safely be taken as having entered into those thirty years of our Lord's life in Nazareth. There may well have been many more things that we cannot wade out into; but let us take these five. And first. Some think that it was an old Levitical law that ruled our Lord's long life of seclusion and silence. Some think that it was Moses who fixed for our Lord the exact year of His entrance on His open Messiahship. And for that view of theirs they quote this enactment out of the Books of Moses —'From thirty years old, and upwards, even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation,' and so on. And then there is the fact that Joseph was thirty years old when he first stood before Pharaoh, and David was thirty years old when he began to reign in Hebron. On the other hand, some others think that all these cases are but so many Old Testament coincidences, and that they do not throw any real light on the problem of our Lord's thirty years' delay in beginning His openly Messianic life.

2. Speaking for myself, it would not stumble me were I to be told that the very homeliest of all homely duties had not a little to do with our Lord's so long seclusion in Nazareth. It would not offend against my own sense of the fitness of things were I to be told that our Lord was not set free from those homely obligations of His till

He began to be about thirty years of age. It would not shock my feelings of reverence toward my Lord were I to be told that His weekly wages were all needed at home till the day when His manifestation to Israel could no longer be postponed. I am not dogmatising for any one else, but I never read this taunt that His townsmen threw at Him on account of his notorious lack of preparation for His preaching, without thinking of the place He must for so long have filled in that early orphaned, and suddenly impoverished household of which He was now the responsible head. 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? the brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon?' And, then, as if they were enumerating those of Mary's family who had not as yet found homes of their own, His contemptuous townsmen go on to add—'And are not His sisters here with us?' Does it not look to you as if His four brothers had all gone away to homes of their own by this time, and had left their widowed mother and her unmarried daughters dependent on her eldest son? Yes. It may well have been for the very humblest and homeliest of reasons that our Lord was still known among His kinsfolk and acquaintance as 'the carpenter,' long after He was well on into His Messianic ministry. 'I have coveted,' said His apostle, 'no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.'

3. But, very humble and very homely as our

Lord's outward life was for thirty years, all that is perfectly compatible with an inward life that was high and heavenly all that time, far beyond all understanding or imagination of men. Who hath known the mind of our Lord all that time, or who hath been His counsellor during those thirty years of His in Nazareth? Who can tell but that it may have taken Him all those thirty years of meditation, and prayer, and communion with His Father, and with the Holy Ghost, and with Himself, to enable Jesus of Nazareth to apprehend that for which He had been apprehended of His Father and of the Holy Ghost? To apprehend, if not to comprehend, what it was for Him, the son of Mary, to be taken up into the very Godhead of the Son of God, and to be made one with the Son of God for ever. What tremendous years were those, and what untold discoveries and experiences and attainments were going forward in those tremendous years, during which a mortal man came at last to feel Himself at home in the bosom of the Father. Just think how long it has taken the Church of Christ with the Holy Ghost to help her, to enter but a little way into that mystery of Godliness, the Word made flesh. It has taken nineteen centuries for the Holy Ghost to take some of those things of Christ and to show them to Paul, and to John, and to Athanasius, and to Basil, and to Cyril, and to a great apostolic succession of doctors and saints, down to our own day. All the Epistles of Paul, the Fourth Gospel, all the canons and

decrees and catechisms of all the Councils and all the Synods and all the Assemblies of the Church of Christ, were already being written on the living tables of our Lord's mind and heart. Nicea sat in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, and beside Nicea sat Constantinople and Chalcedon and many other sacred Synods, till He at whose feet they all sat was able to say such things in their hearing as these:—'No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh to the Father but by Me. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.'

I do not wonder that it took thirty years and more for a mortal man like one of ourselves to be taken up into God, and to be henceforth so much one with God as to be able to come forth from God to speak and to act in such a divine way as He did speak and act in Galilee and in Jewry and in Samaria. If we are to speak about the man Jesus of Nazareth at all in such a transcendent dispensation as was that of the Incarnation, then no number of years would seem to be too many or anything but too few, for the creature to be taken up and for ever made one with the Creator; for Mary's carpenter-son to be taken up and made part and parcel of the very Son of Almighty God Himself. No doubt you will remind me that you yourselves have been made the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty in much shorter time than

thirty years. And I rejoice with you that it is so. But if your sonship is to be a well understood and a solid possession to you, you must always remember that there would have been no such sonship possible for you unless the Sonship of Jesus Christ had gone before yours and so had secured yours for you. Jesus of Nazareth is first taken up into the Divine Sonship, and then you are taken up into Him. Go back often with me to His union with God, and then often descend from that union into our union with Him.

4. And then there is this also. And it is a thing that is almost as great a wonder to me as any,—how during those eighteen years He could be made 'the righteousness of God' to all them that believe. Alford, who is far too much neglected in these days, has this fine passage on this subject:—'We are apt to forget that it was during those eighteen mysterious years that much of the work of the second Adam was done. The growing up through infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, from grace to grace, from holiness to holiness, in subjection, in self-command, and in love, without one polluting touch of sin,—this it was that, consummated by the three years of active ministry, by the passover, and by the cross, constituted that obedience of one Man by which many were made righteous.' Yes; my brethren. The suretyship-righteousness by which we are justified did not spring into existence for the first time when Paul first preached it in his immortal Epistle to the Romans. Far less when Luther wrote his life-

giving commentary on the Galatians. Neither did that glorious righteousness of Christ come into being when you and I first put it on to justification of life. That suretyship-righteousness of Christ for us came into existence, step by step, during those eighteen or thirty-three years. Every breath that our Surety drew during those wonderful years; every thought of His, and every word of His, and every deed of His, it all entered into that justifying righteousness which He was working out, not for Himself but for us. You must not wonder at my often going back with rapture to those great suretyship years. If you were only as naked to your shame as I am, you would go back with me, and would with me watch Jesus Christ working out moment by moment a righteousness for you that you cannot work out for yourselves. 'So, then,' said Greatheart, 'here is a righteousness that Christ, as God, has no need of, for He is God without it. And it is a righteousness that Christ, as man, has no need of, for He is perfect man without it. And since He has it and wanteth it not, therefore He giveth it away, and hence 'tis called the gift of righteousness. Our Lord hath woven two coats, as it were; one for Himself, and one to spare. Wherefore He freely bestows one upon those who have none. Your Lord Christ is He that has worked, and has given away that He worked to the next poor beggar He meets. Thus He has ransomed you from all your sins by His blood, and has covered your polluted and deformed souls with His right-

eousness; for the sake of which, God passeth by you, and will not hurt you, when He comes to judge the world.' 'O, thou loving one!' exclaimed Christiana at Greatheart's words—'thou deservest to have me, for thou hast bought me! Thou hast paid for me ten thousand times more than I am worth. No wonder that this made the water stand in my dear husband's eyes, and that it made him trudge so nimbly on. I am persuaded he wished me with him; but, vile wretch that I was, I let him come all alone. O Mercy! that thy father and mother were here, yea, and Mrs. Timorous also. Nay, I wish with all my heart that here were Madame Wanton too. Surely their hearts would be affected till they could not refuse to become good pilgrims.'

5. And then, as if all that were not enough to make those thirty years of His to overflow, there is this also. During those thirty years He was in all points tempted like as we are. 'And thou shalt remember,'—it may be prophetically and mystically read of Him,—'all the way the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart; to know whether thou wouldst keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.' What a spectacle Nazareth must have been, as it was seen from

heaven, for those thirty tempted and tried years! No wonder that the angels desired to look into them! And no wonder that at the end of those years the heavens opened, and a voice came down, which said, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

'I often take a turn up and down in my old unregenerate state,' says a great saint. Let us all join him in that. Let us often go back over our past years—how many are they now? And let us stop and recall where we were at such and such a year, and what we were doing. Let us go back upon all the way that the Lord our God led us all those wilderness years, to know what was in our heart, and to know whether we would keep his commandments or no. And if the retrospect fills us with a great remorse, and with a great horror at the prospect of death and judgment,—then let us go back, as we have done to-night, to our Surety-Redeemer, and take His holy and God-pleasing life, and lay it over against our own sinful and God-condemned life. And that not once, nor twice. But let us keep constantly doing all that, till the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall drive all remorse and all horror out of our hearts for ever. And till He is made of God to us, not peace of conscience only, but wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. For it hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, till as many as believe in Him are complete in Him.

IX

JESUS ALSO BEING BAPTIZED, AND PRAYING, THE HEAVEN WAS OPENED

LUKE iii. 21

IT is at the Jordan, says Luther, that our New Testament really begins. It is at the Jordan, even more than at Bethlehem, that our New Testament really and truly begins. Our Lord, says the Reformer, was Jesus of Nazareth from His birth. But it was only at His baptism that He became the Christ of God, and it is only as He is the Christ of God that Jesus of Nazareth is really anything to us. All that is recorded about Him from His birth onwards is intensely interesting to us and is indispensably essential to us. But that is so because the Holy Child when He begins to be about thirty years of age is openly proclaimed to be our Redeemer. His baptism is made the occasion of our Lord's ordination into His office as our Mediator; into His three offices as our Prophet, our Priest, and our King. And this was such an epoch in our salvation that the heaven opened and the whole Trinity, as the old writers used to say, came down to the Jordan that day. The Father came down

and said, Thou art My beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased. And the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon Him. And, as for the Second Person of the Godhead, that is He who is praying as He comes up out of the water. That is He who has been tabernacling among men now for thirty years, but who is to-day being publicly ordained to His ministry of reconciliation. Was Luther wrong then when he spake in his table-talk and said in his own bold, original, and racy way that our New Testament really begins at the Jordan?

There is a very engaging and a very suggestive variety in the fourfold account we have given us of that great day's work at the Jordan. Matthew writes in his way, and Mark in his way, and Luke in his way. And while they are all at one in what they write they are all so different in the way they write. And then John leaves the baptism out altogether, and in its place he gives us things that are of the intensest interest to us, and of the most supreme importance; and things, moreover, that we would never have known but for John's way of telling such things. John had so much still unwritten matter in his hands that, had he told us everything he had seen and heard, the world itself would not have contained all the books he could have written about his Master's sayings and doings. 'But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.'

'Suffer it to be so now,' said our Lord to the staggered and protesting Baptist; 'for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' Now, righteousness, you must know, is the sure foundation stone that our Lord had come to lay in Zion. Righteousness is the first foundation stone of all our salvation. Righteousness, as a word, is the greatest word for us in all our New Testament. And this is the first time we come on this great word in all our New Testament. And then it is a fine thing to see that the first occasion and occurrence of this afterwards universal word is from His lips who is soon to be made the righteousness of God to us. Our Saviour had been fulfilling all manner of righteousness from His youth up; ceremonial righteousness and moral righteousness; legal righteousness and spiritual righteousness; and He is but following out all that to the end when He comes to the Jordan to be baptized by John. We are told that John was perplexed beyond measure at the sight of our Lord presenting Himself as a candidate for baptism among the crowds of penitent people. But that was because John did not as yet aright understand our Lord's motive in coming to be baptized. Our Lord did not come confessing His own sins indeed; but He came to make Himself one with them who did so come. You will sometimes see the saintliest woman in all the city coming hand in hand with one of the Magdalenes of the city, and taking her seat beside the chief of sinners on the penitent form. That

poor outcast would never have come to that seat of salvation had not this Christ-like lady taken her by the hand and led her in and sat down beside her; sat down beside her as if there was no difference. Now if the General were to warn off all such saintly women, he would be doing exactly what the Baptist said and did at the Jordan that day. But our divinely-taught friend knows better than to do that. So much better than that does he know, that he sits down on the same form himself beside the offscourings of the city. And thus it is that he gets his penitent form so well filled and his Salvation Army so well recruited. It was something not very unlike that when He who knew no sin came to the Jordan waters along with the Roman soldiers and the Jewish publicans who were there confessing and forsaking their sins.

It is to the third Evangelist that we are indebted for this fine information that it was when Jesus was praying that the heaven was opened. Our Lord prayed without ceasing, but there were times and places when He prayed more earnestly, and His baptism was one of those times and places. What all His thoughts were as He descended under the water and came up again out of it is far too deep for us to wade out into; at the best we can but adoringly guess at His thoughts and at His prayer. May His prayer at that moment not have been that He might receive the Holy Ghost without measure so as to seal Him with all possible certitude to His great office, and so as to

guide Him with all possible clearness as to how and when He was to enter on it? We can safely guess at His unrecorded prayer from the answer He immediately received to His prayer. For while He was yet speaking, the heaven opened and the answer to His prayer came down. My brethren, will nothing teach you to pray? Will all His examples, and all His promises, and all your own needs, and cares, and distresses, not teach you to pray? What hopeless depravity must there be in your heart when, with all He can do, God simply cannot get you to come to Him in prayer. 'It came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray.' Will you not be like that disciple? Will you not tell your Saviour what a dislike, even to downright antipathy, you have at secret prayer; how little you attempt it, and how soon you are weary of it? Only pray, O you prayerless people of His, and the heaven will soon open to you also, and you will hear your Father's voice, and the Holy Ghost will descend like a dove upon you. Only pray, and your joy will soon be full.

The Holy Ghost had often descended upon our Lord's mother before He was born, and every day on Himself since He was born. At the same time this was a very special and an altogether extraordinary descent of the Holy Ghost at the Jordan. But why was it as a dove? Why was it in a bodily shape like that winged creature which we call a dove? 'All apparitions,' says Thomas Goodwin,

'that God at any time made of Himself, were not so much made to show to men what God is in Himself, as to show us how He is affected toward us, and to declare what effects He will work in us.' Excellently and enlighteningly said. For if there is one winged creature better fitted than another to symbolise how God is affected toward us, and what effects God would fain work in us, it is surely just a dove. 'For a dove, you know,' says the sometime President of Magdalen College, Oxford, 'is the most meek and the most innocent of all birds; without gall, without talons, having no fierceness in it, expressing nothing but love and friendship to its mate in all its carriages, and mourning over its mate in all its distresses. And, accordingly, a dove was a most fit emblem of the Spirit that was poured out upon our Saviour when He was just about to enter on the work of our salvation. For as sweetly as doves do converse with doves, so may every sinner and Christ converse together.' Quite so. And to go no further than His very first sermon, what could there be more dove-like than the text He took out of the evangelical prophet? 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.' Beautiful, is it not? Blessed to hear for the thousandth time, is it not? Remember the Jordan, then. Go often back to

the Jordan. Look up at the opening heaven and think you see the descending dove. And at any time when you have to go to Christ again as a broken-hearted sinner, bruised and blinded with your sin, go back to Him thinking of the Jordan, and of the dove, and pleading to yourself and to Him the argument of His favourite text. And then in return to Him for all that, be you a very dove yourself. Be gentle, be kind, be helpful, be to all men a man of an approachable, affable, inviting, dovelike disposition. Be to all men a man after the manner of Christ to you, and after the manner of the dove among all the birds of the air. It is His own word to all His disciples: Be ye harmless as doves.

And a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased. Think of it, my brethren. Never once since the fall of Adam and Eve had the Maker of men been able to say these words till He said them to Jesus Christ that day at the Jordan. Almighty God had often looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did good and sinned not. But when His eyelids tried the children of men it was always with the same result. Not one. Not Noah, not Abraham, not Jacob, not Joseph, not Moses, not David; no not one single patriarch, or prophet, or psalmist, or saint, in all the house of Israel. But here at last is a man after God's own heart. Here at last is the second Adam, with whom God is well pleased. Listen well to these words,—'Well pleased.'

Think with all your might Who pronounces these words, and over Whom they are pronounced. Think, also, what all these words mean in His mouth who utters them, and in His ears, and in His heart, who hears them. And then, having thought all that well over; be entirely selfish for once. Turn to yourself and think what blessed words these words, 'well pleased,' are for you. Think it out how these words bear on you, and how these words come all the way from the Jordan to belong to you. Think continually of what these words absolutely secure and seal down for ever to you. As, also, what they expect and claim of you. For one thing, these words, 'I am well pleased with My beloved Son,' expect and demand of you that you shall as never before be very ill-pleased with yourself. These words, well pleased, rightly understood, and rightly laid to heart, will henceforth make every man who hears them to be more ill pleased with himself than he ever is any more with any one else. For then you will come to see that no one can give both God and man such constant cause to be ill pleased with him as you continually do. If you are ever satisfied with yourself, then Christ is nothing to you. He has come in vain so far as you are concerned. But if there is nothing and no one on the face of the whole earth who ever causes you so much pain and disappointment and dissatisfaction and displeasure as you continually cause yourself, then you are the very man to go straight to the Jordan, and to accompany Christ through all that baptism scene

of His for you. Do not despair of yourself though you are far worse pleased with yourself to-night than ever you were before. Do not despair of yourself so long as the Jordan runs in your New Testament. Be as ill pleased with yourself as you like, if all that only makes you better pleased than ever with Christ. It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all your fulness dwell. And if your displeasure, even to disgust at yourself and despair of yourself, only works round to make you of the same mind about His Son as the Father is,—what more would you have out of this life of yours on earth? If you can look on Jesus the Christ coming up out of the water praying for Himself and for you as your Mediator, and if you will take home to your heart of hearts these glorious words spoken over Him by His Father, then His Father is well pleased with you henceforth, for His righteousness sake. And what more would you have? What more, what better, could God Himself do for you, or for any man, than to proclaim you accepted in His beloved Son. Beyond that even God cannot go. Beseech Him then to go that length with you and with me to-night.

X

JOHN LOOKING UPON JESUS AS HE WALKED, HE SAITH, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

JOHN i. 36.

BOTH the Baptist's birth and all his upbringing had prepared him to preach Christ. The Baptist's birth was only second to the birth of the Saviour Himself in its wonderfulness and in its grace. And not even the Virgin Mary herself was a better mother than Elizabeth was, nor was Joseph a better father to the child Jesus than Zacharias was to the child John. For Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And what more could be said of Joseph and Mary themselves? And then such were the wonders connected both with the birth and the circumcision of John that all who heard those wonders laid them up in their hearts, and said, What manner of child shall this be?

Had Zacharias's son not been predestined to be a preacher he would have been a priest. For Zacharias himself was a priest of the order of Abia,

and his son would have succeeded to his father's office in the priesthood had he not been fore-ordained of God to the far higher office of the pulpit. At the same time it must always be remembered about John the Baptist that he was born and brought up in the house of a sacrificing and interceding priest. All the conversations that the child heard at his father's table would make him familiar from his very infancy with the names of all the saints of God in Israel, and with all the names and all the offices of the coming Christ. Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Aaron, the pascal lamb and the passover supper, the sprinkling of the peace-speaking blood, and the salvation that would come to himself also by means of that blood; little John heard little else from his father and his mother and from his tutors and governors. The twelfth of Exodus, and the fifty-third of Isaiah, would be the Sabbath-day lesson of Elizabeth's little son, just as the twenty-third Psalm and the Shorter Catechism are the Sabbath-day lesson of our little sons. Take this child, and bring him up for Me, and I will give you your wages. And Zacharias and Elizabeth faithfully earned and abundantly received their promised reward.

Just what it was that drove John away from his father's house and made him a solitary in the deserts of the Dead Sea, we can only guess, we do not know. John is totally lost to us from the day of his circumcision till thirty years after we suddenly discover him with his raiment of camel's

hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, preaching to his immense congregations and always taking this for his text: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Repent and flee from the wrath to come! And it was when he was preaching repentance to one of his immense congregations one day that John saw Jesus coming to him, and stopped his sermon and proclaimed and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! Nothing came of that sermon, nor of his announcement of the Christ that day, but the next day John stood and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as He walked, John said again to his two disciples, Behold the Lamb of God! Every man has his own walk, and the Son of Man had His. We know men by their walk, and John and his two disciples knew the Christ that day by His walk. 'It is a good thing,' writes Seneca to one of his disciples, 'to walk modestly and gravely, to carry a thoughtful and a reverential countenance, and to bear about with you the gait and the gestures of a good man.' Now Jesus, you may be sure, bore about both the gait and the gestures of a good man as He walked that day. The thoughtfulness and the gravity that John saw in Jesus of Nazareth that day completely became the new name that John gave to Jesus that day, and completely became the Messianic office that John that day proclaimed to be His office. For Jesus walked that day, and every day, like who He was, and like what He had come to do. He walked

till all who had waited for Him took knowledge of Him that He must be the Lamb of God. He walked as no one else has ever walked, before or since, for He walked as one who bore on His head the sin of the world. He walked already as He walked long afterwards when, as He went before them on His way to Jerusalem, His disciples were amazed, and as they followed Him, they were afraid. Now it was with something of the same amazement and the same fear that John and his two disciples saw Jesus as He walked that day at Bethabara, and knew Him to be the Lamb of God. And his two disciples heard John speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Master, where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and they abode with Him that day. I know that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written were all the things that Jesus said and did to be written every one. At the same time a new world could not have been created for a better purpose than to contain such things as were asked and answered in that humble dwelling at Bethabara that night. What seek ye? demanded our Lord. And they answered: 'We seek to know more about the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' All the water of the Jordan had not washed those two disciples clean. All that John and his Jordan, taken together, could do for Andrew and that

other disciple was to throw them all the more, them and their load of sin, on the Lamb of God. Art Thou indeed the Lamb of God? they asked. Then, if Thou art, may we come and see where Thou dwellest? And He said, as He always says, Come and see!

Now whatever may have been said and done in that Bethabara dwelling that night, when all taken together, it could not possibly come near what has been said and done in this house of God this day. Much as we would have enjoyed to have been in that house all that night and to have heard from our Lord's own lips all He had to say about Himself as the Lamb of God, we are a thousand times better to be here. For His hour was not yet come. And those two disciples were not yet able to bear the half of what has been set before us in all its fulness this Communion day. Let us close this Communion day then with an adoring meditation on that most timeous and most appropriate hymn, 'O Lamb of God, I come.' Andrew and the other disciple had no psalm nor hymn nor spiritual song put into their mouth that night at all to compare with the hymn that has been put into our mouth all this day and all this night:—

> Just as I am, without one plea
> But that Thy blood was shed for me,
> And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
> O Lamb of God, I come.

'*Just* as I am.' Now, a happier word than that is not in all the world. A better selected

word is not in all the world. It was a stroke of evangelical genius to choose that word, and to lay it as the very first syllable in this song of salvation, '*Just* as I am.' That is to say, simply as I am, exactly as I am, precisely as I am. Not in any other shape or form. Not in any other character or category. Not any better, but '*Just* as I am.' And as no one else has ever been, or ever will be to the end of time. I am alone, and have no fellow, nor will ever have. My sins are my own, and my misery is my own. '*Just* as I am, I come.'

And 'without one plea.' If I had even one good and sound plea, you may depend upon it, I would plead it. But I have not one. I have no excuse, no exculpation, no gloss, no varnish. If I had, I would plead it like Adam. It was the woman that did it, was Adam's plea. It was the serpent, was the woman's plea. I did not think that one blow would have killed him, pled Cain. The wine was red, and it gave its colour to the cup, and it so moved itself aright, pled Noah. I was faint with hunger, pled Esau, and the pottage was so savoury. The woman was very beautiful to look upon, pled David. They all had or thought they had, their one plea. But I have no plea why God's judgment against my sin should not be executed speedily. My mouth is stopped. I remember and am confounded, and shall never be able to open my mouth any more because of my shame, said the prophet. But when we have no plea; when our mouth is stopped, when we are

confounded and condemned, then these two pleas are put into our mouth. 'Without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee.' Thy *blood*, O Lamb of God, and Thy *bidding*. These are now my two all-prevailing pleas. With these two pleas I shall always come with boldness to the throne of grace. And I am sure that as often as I plead those two pleas I shall never be put to shame. Let us come then. Let us come and let us learn better and better in what way to come. In what way and with what manner of motion. We come, but not by locomotion as in all other cases of coming. We come, but not by removing ourselves out of one place and removing ourselves to another place. We come by a real locomotion, indeed; but it is by the locomotion of the mind and the heart. It is not by the locomotion of our feet, says Augustine, but by the locomotion of our affections. And Augustine could speak on this subject with the authority of an incomparable experience. Think you see the Lamb of God in all the situations in which He is set before you in the Gospels, and then come to Him in all those situations. Think you see Him as John Bunyan thought he saw Him. 'Methought I was as if I had seen Him born, as if I had seen Him grow up, as if I had seen Him walk through this world, from His cradle to His cross; to which, also, when He came, I saw how gently He gave Himself to be hanged and nailed upon it for my sins and wicked doings. Also as I was musing upon this His progress, that

Scripture dropped on my spirit, He was ordained for the slaughter. I saw also as if He leaped at the grave's mouth for joy that He was risen again, and had got the conquest over our dreadful foes. I have also, in the Spirit, seen Him a Man on the right hand of God the Father for me; and have seen the manner of His coming from Heaven to judge the world with glory, and have been confirmed in these things by the Scriptures following.' Think you see the Lamb of God in that way. You may not have such inward eyes as John Bunyan had. No other man ever had such eyes as the tinker had. But use the eyes you have on the best things, and your eyes will grow better by use. Only direct your eyes sufficiently often, and sufficiently fixedly, and sufficiently long at a time on the Lamb of God, and there is no limit to their increasing clearness and their increasing power. God gave your inward eyes to you in order that you might see His Son with them. And that, like the prophet, your eyes might then affect your heart. Look, then, till your heart is affected, and till with your whole heart you come to Him. And come at all times, and come in every way. Come from all your former ignorance and indifference, and come to the intensest interest and anxiety. Come from never thinking a thought about the Lamb of God to thinking about nothing and about no one half so much. Come from seeking your own pleasure in everything to asking what will please Him. Come from taking your own way in everything to taking His way in everything,

and your neighbour's way as often and as far as it is His way. Come from a hardness of heart like the nether millstone, to an utter brokenness of heart, and till your head is waters. Come from never taking time to pray in secret, to praying in secret in all places, and at all times. Come like old Bishop Andrewes. Come every fourth day of the week from pride to humility, and from envy to pitifulness, and from wrath to patience, and from gluttony to sobriety, and from lasciviousness to purity, and from covetousness to contentment, and from sloth to ready zeal. And in all that, and at the heart of all that, and as the true end of all that, say continually, O Lamb of God, I come.

> And waiting not
> To rid my soul of one dark blot.

Wait, said Satan to Teresa; wait, woman. Wait till you have washed away that dark blot in the holy water. Wait till you have done some decent penance for such a sin of self-indulgence. Wait till the pain is a little worn off your conscience. Wait, for shame, woman, and go not so foul-handed into the very presence of God. 'Let no one,' she says to us, 'be tempted of the devil as I was to give up prayer on account of unworthiness. Let him rather believe that if he will only still repent and pray our Lord will still hear and answer.' And the darker the blots, and the more recent, come all the more immediately, importunately, believingly, assuredly. And always say, O Lamb of God, I come.

'Sight, riches, *healing of the mind.*' I like that line immensely. I repeat that line continually. I repeat it sometimes every day, and every hour. And this other line always links itself on to that line, till they run together, 'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?' These two lines run in my mind continually. Do they ever run in your mind? If they do, let this confession of mine be some encouragement to those who feel so absolutely alone and desolate as they cry continually—O Lamb of God! Sight, riches, healing of the mind! And, O Lamb of God, canst Thou not minister to a mind diseased like mine?

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down—
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Amen.

XI

AND IMMEDIATELY THE SPIRIT DRIVETH HIM INTO THE WILDERNESS

Mark i. 12

OUR classical scholars have a recognised rule that they observe as often as they are engaged upon an ancient manuscript. A rule to this effect: that the more difficult to receive any offered reading is, the more likely it is to be the true reading. Now each one of the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, has his own peculiar reading in the way he narrates to us the manner of our Lord's entrance upon His time of temptation. And since that threefold variation of theirs allows and indeed invites me to take my free choice among those three readings of theirs, I have no hesitation, for my part, in preferring the reading of Mark before the other two. For if his reading is the most difficult at first sight to receive of the three, afterwards it becomes the most lifelike, the most arresting, and the most suggestive, of the three offered readings. And all that goes to prove to me that Mark's reading is the true and original reading, and that the other two readings have,

so to speak, been toned down from it. 'And immediately the Spirit *driveth* Him into the wilderness. And he was there forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.'

But what exactly does Mark mean by his, at first sight, not very reverent-looking language about our Lord? With what propriety and becomingness can this evangelist write that our Redeemer was *driven* away from His fast-opening work, and away out into the solitudes of the wilderness? My brethren, you must never think of our Lord as having been at any time *driven* anywhere by any compulsion outside of Himself. You must take care not to misread this admittedly strong expression of Mark as if our Lord went into the wilderness against his own will. If He could, with any propriety of speech, be said to be *driven* at all, it must be clearly understood that all the driving came from within Himself. We ourselves sometimes say that our own thoughts are driving us to do such and such a thing: our consciences or our hearts. And so was it with our Lord. It was His own mind, and His own heart, and His own imagination, that all worked together to drive Him away from the presence of men. And when it is said that He was *driven of the Spirit*, what is that but that both His mind and His heart were as full as they could hold of the Holy Ghost who had just descended upon Him. His whole soul was full of the Holy Ghost; somewhat as so much water, while still

remaining water, is filled with the warmth of wine; and somewhat as so much otherwise cold and hard iron is heated and softened and made malleable with the all-penetrating and all-softening fire.

Let this be held fast, then, that our Lord was not *driven* at that time, or at any other time, by any force or any other kind of influence outside of His own mind and heart. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, He was wont to say. And He said that, as He said so much else, out of His own experience. For He Himself was at all times and in all things quickened and led and directed and driven, if you will, by the Holy Spirit who dwelt within Him without measure. And it was the same Holy Spirit of God filling His own spirit that drove Him away from the Jordan, and away out into the wilderness there to seek a seclusion in which to meditate and to pray till He had wrestled Himself free from all invading doubts, all unsettling fears, and all distracting thoughts, after which victory He was able to return and take up His work and finish it. No; you must beware not to misread Mark as if our Lord was driven away into the wilderness against His own will; if He was *driven* at all He was driven by His own mind and heart and imagination, all filled and enforced by the indwelling and the inward drawing of the Holy Ghost.

But all that only throws us back the more on this previous question. What was it that took such sudden and overpowering possession of our

Lord at His baptism? What new thing concerning Himself could it be that came to Him in those days so as to drive Him away for such a long time from the neighbourhood of all men? Well, I cannot claim to have divine inspiration for it, but I think it was this. For my part, I feel sure that it was the Baptist's salutation that so suddenly and so completely overcame our Lord. BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHICH TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD. That annunciation came on our Lord that day as if He had never heard it before. As a matter of fact He had both read it and heard it read a thousand times before, but He had never fully *realised* it till now that He was actually entering upon it. When John took Him and pointed Him so unmistakably to the cross, Jesus looked away forward to the cross, and as good as answered and said to it—I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee! Did not our heart burn within us, said the two disciples, while He talked to us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And did not His own heart burn as never before when John pointed to Him as He walked, and said, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD? Yes; His heart burned almost to ashes under the fierce heat, as it did once again in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was again driven into a still more awful wilderness. You and I are stocks and stones. Our hearts are harder than the nether millstone. We read and hear and speak about sin and its atonement like men in a dream. Our hearts are

so besotted that we never reflect what sin is, nor what its wages is. But hear Him. 'Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.' Some of you will lie in wait, and will turn upon me, and will say to me in anger, that our Lord knew quite well and from the beginning, that He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. So He did. But He was a man of like passions as we are. And as a consequence He was tempted in all points like as we are. And thus it was that when the Baptist brought Him face to face with the cross, and that so suddenly and so unexpectedly, He said to Andrew, to Peter, and to John, 'Tarry ye here while I go and pray yonder.' By all that had gone before His Baptism: by His humiliation of Himself from heaven, by His birth, by His circumcision, by His thirty years of growth in grace and in wisdom, and now by the unmeasured descent upon Him of the Holy Ghost—'The only gain He had purchased for Himself by all that was to be made capable of loss and detriment for the good of others.' And it took Him all those forty days and forty nights alone with His Father and with Himself to completely reconcile Himself, and to completely surrender Himself, and to completely submit Himself to all the loss and detriment that the Lamb of God must first and last undergo. And till He returned back to all His undertakings, saying—'Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will.'

—The Son of God,
Musing, and much revolving in His breast
How best the mighty work He might begin
Of Saviour to mankind, and which way first
Publish His God-like office, now mature,
One day walked forth alone, the Spirit leading,
And His deep thoughts, the better to converse
With solitude; till far from track of men,
Thought following thought, and step by step led on,
He entered now the bordering desert wild,
And, with dark shades and rocks environ'd round,
His holy meditations thus pursued.
Sole, but with holiest meditations fed,
Into Himself descended, and at once
All His great work to come before Him set;
How to begin, how to accomplish best
His end of being on Earth, and mission high.

Now, my truly Christian brethren, here again, and in all that, as He was so are all they who are His in this world. This is a very dreadful world of ours, by reason of sin. It was so to Him, and it is so still, and will remain so, to all who are His and who walk in His footsteps. And it is so in this way, as well as in many other ways. There came to Him many successive stages in His appointed life as our Saviour from sin; many successive and sudden steps and stages, when He was *driven*, as we have just seen, into new and unexpected and as yet unprepared-for wildernesses of trial and temptation. Those experiences came to our Forerunner far oftener, and in far more terrible ways, than we could bear to be told. And as He was in all that, and without measure, so are all His true followers, each one

in his own measure. Look around, look within, and you will see it for yourselves. For no man will be able to make you believe these things, either about your Lord, or about yourselves, till you have both seen them and experienced them in yourselves. You, then, who have experienced them, witness for me if this is not the truth. That, like your Lord, you come to turning-points; to new departures and new experiences in your life, not wholly unlike what our Lord's baptism was in His life. Things come to you that simply *drive* you into situations and circumstances, the terrible temptations arising out of which are almost more than you can bear. Sometimes it will be the case that your temptations will arise from among the best blessings of your life. Sometimes a great endowment of gifts, followed with a great baptism of sanctifying and consecrating graces, will point you out as the man prepared of God for some great office in the Church. And this providence and that so besets you behind and before, and God and man so lay their hands upon you, that you may truly be said to be *driven* to take such and such a step. But no sooner have you taken that step than you are thereby plunged into a whole sea of more terrible temptations than ever before, till your very promotion threatens to be your perdition. You look back to the days of your youth and obscurity and silence as, I have no doubt, our Lord often looked back to His thirty years in Nazareth. I will not say that he ever wished that He was back

there again never to leave it; but you sometimes wish you were. Such a life is this to you; so sin-possessed, so sin-warped and entangled, and so full of untold temptations to sin. The sweetest relationships of life also are so surprised with new and unexpected temptations and trials, that you would not have believed could possibly invade your Eden-like life; your life which you have been led into, as Luke has it, have been driven into, as Mark has it. *Driven* into, you say, as you look around you and within you and before you and see that only death will release you from some of your worst trials and temptations. You are a study in sin and in temptation to sin to yourself. You wonder at God and at yourself. The house you live in; the street you live in; the city in which your house stands; your next door neighbour; the congregation in which you try to worship; and a thousand things arising out of all these things, make you cry,—who shall deliver you? He will, who was your first Forerunner in all manner of trial and temptation. He will, who plotted and planned all these trials and temptations for you. And who modelled all your circumstances and all your relationships as near as could be to His own. He will watch over you and He will in His own time and way deliver you. For He still remembers how He Himself was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness, and was kept there forty days and forty nights, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts.

And then to crown it all, and to be the

absolute tragedy of it all, the holier you are, and the more like Christ you become, the more awful, and the more continual, will your temptations and your trials become. You will not really know what temptations and trials worth the name are, till you meet them when you are fairly started and are well on to be for ever out of them. If you would see really wild beasts and hear them roar and gnash their teeth and have their hot breath on your cheek; and if you would learn how devilish the devil can be, let the Spirit drive you deep into a still unsanctified heart and life. As thus: 'About the midst of this valley, I perceived the mouth of Hell to be, and it stood also hard by the wayside. Now, thought Christian, what shall I do? And ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance, with sparks and hideous noises (things that cared not for Christian's sword, as did Apollyon before), that he was forced to put up his sword, and betake himself to another weapon called *All-Prayer*, so he cried in my hearing—O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul. Then he went on a great while, yet still the flames would be reaching towards him; also, he heard doleful voices, and rushings to and fro, so that he sometimes thought he would be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the streets. This frightful sight was seen, and these dreadful noises were heard by him for several miles together; and coming to a place, when he thought he heard a company of fiends coming forward to meet him, he stopped, and

began to muse what he had best to do. Sometimes he had half a thought to go back. One thing I would not let slip, I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded, that he did not know his own voice; and thus I perceived it. Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded out of his own mind. But he had not the discretion neither to stop his ears, nor to know from whence these blasphemies came. When Christian had travelled in this disconsolate condition for some considerable time, he thought he heard the voice of a man, as going on before him, saying—Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no ill, for Thou art with me. Then was he glad, and that for these reasons. (Let those who are interested in these things look up the reasons and lay them to heart.) Then sang Christian:—

O world of wonders! (I can say no less)
That I should be preserved in this distress
That I have met with here! O blessed be
That hand that from it hath delivered me!
Dangers in darkness, devils, hell, and sin,
Did compass me while I this vale was in;
Yea, snares, and pits, and traps, and nets did lie
My path about, that worthless, silly I
Might have been catch't, intangled, and cast down;
But since I live, let Jesus *wear the crown.'*

XII

OUR LORD'S FIRST TEXT

Luke iv. 16-19

I SHALL leave you all to read at your leisure the interesting descriptions that Farrar, and Geikie, and Edersheim, and Stalker will all give you of the synagogue in Israel, and of its Sabbath-day services. It is most interesting reading, and it will well repay all your time and attention. Dr. Bruce, in his extraordinarily graphic commentary, calls this passage now open before us Luke's 'frontispiece' to all our Lord's preaching. This evangelist, in placing this picture of our Lord at the opening of His preaching life, as good as says to us that if we study this preliminary passage well we shall have in it the best possible preface to the whole pulpit-life of our Lord. And a very vivid and life-like picture it is that Luke here gives us. For as we read this chapter of his we are taken back into the synagogue of Nazareth that Sabbath morning, till we see, as it were with our own eyes, all that goes on in that synagogue. We see Joseph's Son standing up for to read. We see the book of the prophet Esaias delivered

unto Him. And when He had found the place we hear Him reading the text that we know so well ever since He read it that Sabbath morning. How I wish that we had His sermon as well as His text! What would I not give to be able to read His own sermon on this text to you to-night? Shorthand had been invented by Cicero just the century before. And no doubt by this time some of his well-trained reporters had found their way to Galilee, where so many Roman lawyers and Roman officers were carrying on Roman business. And it is not irreverent; it is not in any way wrong in us to express a wish that one of those early stenographers of Cicero's had found his way into that Jewish synagogue that morning. For, if he had, sure I am that the instinct of his art would have compelled him to take out his pencil. But in the absence of our Lord's very sermon that morning on this text, I must do my best to make such a sermon on it as I am able this evening. And I set about that task not wholly without hope, depending on His promise that the Holy Ghost shall teach me in this same hour what I shall say.

To begin with. If we would enter truly into any of our Lord's texts, and would really and truly take home to ourselves any of our Lord's sermons, we must continually keep in mind what, exactly and exclusively, His errand was in this world. SIN was His errand in this world, and it was His only errand. He would never have been in this world at all, either preaching sermons, or

doing anything else, but for SIN. He could have done everything else for us without coming down into this world at all; everything else but take away our sin. And thus it is that our sin is the true key wherewith to open up all He ever said, and all He ever did, while He was with us in this world. And thus it is also that unless your sin is ever before you, neither Jesus Christ Himself, nor His coming, nor any of His texts, nor any of His sermons, will ever be understood by you. You will not understand or comprehend one single clause of His first text, nor one single sentence of my present sermon upon His first text, unless you attend all the time as a sinner, and as nothing else but a sinner. You must be poor, as only a sinner is poor. And you must be broken-hearted, as only a sinner is broken-hearted. And you must be in captivity, as only a sinner is in captivity. And you must be blind, as only a sinner is blind. And you must be bruised, as only a sinner is bruised; first by the fall of Adam, and then by all your own falls. Then, and then only, and thus and thus only, will all your eyes be fastened on Him. Then, and then only, will you bear Him witness, and will wonder at the gracious words which proceed out of His mouth.

As thus: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; or to the meek, as Esaias originally has it. But the poor and the meek are both the same thing. The poor and the meek are one and the same class of men in this special

classification of men. Now, there is no poverty in all this world for one moment to compare with the squalid poverty of a sinner. And there is no meekness in all this world like the meekness of a prostrate sinner. You can do anything that your wicked heart prompts you to do to a truly prostrate sinner. You are quite safe to trample on him as much as you like. You can maltreat him as much as Aaron and Miriam maltreated Moses. And the trodden worm will never once turn on you till God turns on you. And God's turning on you till you are a leper as white as snow, will only make your meek victim to charge himself with having brought all that evil upon you. Now, it was out of His pure pity and compassion for such poor and meek-hearted and maltreated sinners as Moses was that God sent His Son to save them from all their sins and miseries. Their sins having had sin's perfect work in producing such spiritual poverty and such spiritual meekness, God looked down and saw their affliction, till He sent His own Son to find the place where it was written concerning them, and to say,—This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all the poor in spirit and all the meek in heart to the end of time, will wonder at the gracious words which that day proceeded, and still proceed, out of His mouth.

Again; there are broken hearts, and broken hearts, as we say. And it is not by any means any and every broken heart that God has sent His Son to heal. He comes to heal those hearts only that

no one else can heal. If it is in the power of man or woman to heal the break in your heart, then you do not need to go to Christ, and He does not need to come to you. He is this kind of a healer that He only heals what you cannot heal for yourself, and what no one else can heal for you. You will continually come on this kind of case in this world. You will come on a heart so broken by this world that you are not able to administer so much as one word of comfort to the inconsolable sufferer. But you come back to-morrow, and behold you are confounded, all is in such sunshine. The hopelessly broken heart of yesterday is healed and all its past breaks and bruises are forgotten. But if sin has broken your heart, and sin only, then yours is a clear case for Christ, and for Christ alone. Miserable comforters to a sin-broken heart are all other comforters but Christ. He alone can treat a case like yours. And it is sin, and the heart-fractures of sin alone, that He condescends to deal with. Skin-deep wounds, and surface scratches, do not bring the carriages of the great doctors to your door. But heart-diseases and secret cancers that mock at all their medicines; things like these fascinate our best physicians till they can think of no other patient but you. They will sit at your bedside all night covered with shame at their ignorance and their utter inability to minister to such a deep disease as is your disease. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

Stier thinks that Esaias was such a real and literal prophet that he penned this passage intending it exclusively as a text for our Lord. And he holds that this text lay shut down and silent on the prophet's page till that Sabbath morning when our Lord discovered it, and said, This day is this Scripture fulfilled to every broken heart. And Stier is right. This great text was prophetically penned for that morning in Nazareth, and for this evening in Edinburgh. And especially for this evening in Edinburgh. For sure I am that there were no such broken hearts in all that Jewish synagogue that morning as there are in this Christian church this evening. There could not be. And accordingly Christ Himself could not command such a hearing that morning as I myself am commanding here this evening. For—

> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him who makes it.

And so it is with a sermon. A sermon's prosperity comes under the same law as a jest's prosperity. And it is your sin-broken hearts that give even to my poor sermon this evening a prosperity that my Lord's sermon did not experience in Nazareth that morning.

For some reason or other, and very unlike himself, the evangelist has left out several essential clauses of the original text as Esaias wrote it. And clauses, I feel as sure as if I had been there, that Christ did not leave out that morning.

When I turned, just for curiosity's sake, to compare the evangelist's report with the prophet's own page, my heart gave a great leap of joy, as your heart will give immediately. For, what did I read that Luke had unaccountably left out? I read this. And I have now the joy of reading it to you. 'To comfort all that mourn. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' I, for one, cannot believe that Jesus Christ closed the book and gave it to the minister, and sat down, and left these wonderful words unread. No. His omission of these golden words is to me inconceivable and impossible. You may depend upon it, God's Anointed did not dismiss that congregation that morning till He had spoken some never-to-be-forgotten words to those who mourned in that Nazareth-Zion that Sabbath morning. 'Blessed are they that mourn,' He would say, 'for they shall be comforted.' And he would go on to comfort them Himself, and on the spot. Those, that is, who came under the prophet's description of mourners in Zion. For there would be many mourners in that synagogue that morning, as there are in this church this evening, who did not, and do not, come under this description. You yourselves can comfort all outside mourners: all mourners who have fallen into their mourning outside of Zion. There are whole heaps of ashes for which you yourselves can give beauty. And there are whole worlds of mourning for which you can

give one another the oil of joy. But there is a kind of heaviness in Zion that none of you can touch. Peter put his finger on it in these words—'In heaviness, if need be, through manifold temptations.' Christ alone can alleviate that heaviness. And even He can only alleviate it. Even He cannot entirely remove it, as long as there is a need be for it. But He can mightily alleviate it, if not yet wholly remove it. As He does; the most tempted of you being witnesses, by such other Scriptures of His as these: Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace.

My meditation of Him shall be sweet, said the Psalmist. Now, my meditation on all these things leaves these three deep and sweet impressions on my mind and my heart this evening—

1. The free grace and the rich grace of it all. He does it all for us, and we receive it all from Him. We bring the sin, and He brings the salvation. We bring the poverty, and He brings the riches. We bring the broken heart, and He brings the healing. We bring the captivity, and He brings the deliverance. We bring the prison, and He brings the opening of the prison. We bring the mourning, and He brings the joy. We bring the ashes, and He brings the beauty. We bring the spirit of heaviness, and He brings the garment of praise. The short and the long of it is this—it

is all sin and misery on our side, and it is all free grace and a full salvation on His side. Till no wonder that all your eyes are fastened on Him. No wonder that you are all bearing Him witness, and are wondering at the gracious words which proceed to you out of His mouth.

2. And this impression is deep in my mind also, that all your ministers should read their Master's first text the first thing every new Sabbath morning, till they set out to their work anointed afresh with the self-same Spirit as that with which He was anointed that Sabbath morning. And if they did, what a ministry they would have all their days down to the very end! What comforters would they be made to those who mourn in the Zion where they minister! And what a crown of glory would they be surprised with when the Chief Shepherd shall appear! Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.

3. And with all that, this reflection arises in my own heart as I close. 'God had only one Son,' says Dr. Thomas Goodwin, 'and He made Him a minister.' And this text and this sermon leave me in this matter in the same mind with God. For, if I had ten sons; if I had a hundred sons; I would make them all ministers if I could, and every one of them a far better preacher on this text than their father.

XIII

A TEACHER COME FROM GOD

JOHN iii. 2

THE third chapter of the Fourth Gospel is in some respects an outstanding chapter. For one thing, in his third chapter the evangelist introduces his readers into the first inquiry-room, as we would call it. And in that canonical inquiry-room our Lord Himself is the Director and the Counsellor of awakened souls, while a ruler of the Jews is the inquirer and the convert; and all the time the evangelist is standing by and is laying up for our learning all that he sees and hears that night. Nicodemus had not slept soundly one single night, nor had he spent one single day without feelings of remorse, ever since his visit of inspection and interrogation to Bethabara. Among the many impressive things that Nicodemus had seen and heard at the Jordan, the baptism of this new Rabbi, called Jesus of Nazareth, was the most impressive and the most memorable. And Nicodemus had never got over that. Ever since his mission to Bethabara Nicodemus had carried about in his conscience this

self-condemnation that he also ought to have offered himself to the Baptist for repentance and for reformation and for the seal of John's baptism to all that. And Nicodemus would undoubtedly have come back from Bethabara to Jerusalem one of John's baptized disciples, had it not been for his high standing in Jerusalem, and for his fear of his fellow Pharisees. And ever since Nicodemus had despised himself and condemned himself in his own heart and conscience because he had not the courage to do what he knew he ought to do. At the same time it was not the Baptist and his baptism that weighed so much on the old ruler's mind; it was much more Jesus of Nazareth. It was all he saw and heard concerning our Lord that took such possession night and day of Nicodemus. And thus it was that at last he stole away out of the city one dark night and stumbled down to Bethany, where Jesus of Nazareth was understood to lodge. I cannot put you in possession of all the things that were agitating the old ruler's mind that night. To you and to me Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. But just what Nicodemus feared that this mysterious stranger might yet turn out to be, we cannot with any certainty say. 'Rabbi,' he introduced himself, and said: 'we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God.' But it took the old ruler's breath away when our Lord answered him with this so sudden sword-thrust: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' You have all the rest of the interview

by heart. And my part now is to gather out of this interview some of the lessons it is written to teach us about our own being born again. For this is the first of all lessons for us to learn. This is the first and the best lesson for us in all this world of lessons. And it is the lesson that leaves us the fool of all fools, till we have learned it and received it and experienced it. It is infinitely the most humbling of all our lessons. But it is at the same time infinitely the most consoling and cheering of all our lessons. Let us learn it then. And let us, by God's timeous grace to us, learn it to-night.

Everything for you depends on your being born again, says this Teacher in His sword-thrust to-night to us also. It had been better you had never been born at all, He says to us, unless you are to be born again. Your birth of your mother, He says to us all, will be no blessing either to her or to you; but rather the reverse, unless you are born again. For, 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh.' And we know that to be so to our bitter experience, and without His saying it at all. Only, without having our bitter experience of it this Teacher come from God knew what He was saying, and knew it down to the bottom, and away out to the end—a knowledge which we do not yet fully possess. And though He said it over and over again, and with every possible emphasis, He had no pleasure in saying it. And He would never have said it at all, and so many more things like it, unless He had been authorised and en-

abled to remedy it to Nicodemus and to you and to me.

'Flesh,' before we begin to think, is just so much mere sound to you and to me. It is just so many letters in ink upon the page. We read it and hear it and it passes away. But He knew what He said when He said 'flesh.' He saw it when He said it, and He felt in His heart all He said with His mouth. He shuddered as He said 'flesh.' And both John and Nicodemus saw Him shudder till they shuddered to be beside Him. He saw the whole evil heart of man as He said it. He saw all the sin and misery of human life from the fall of Adam to the day of judgment as He said it. He saw his own cross on Calvary as He said it. And as He said it He saw Himself sitting on the throne of judgment and all who are born of the flesh standing at His left hand. And He would have been flesh Himself; He would have been made of stone, to see all that, and not to shudder to His inmost soul, as He said it. 'Flesh,' as our Lord here uses that awful Scripture word, is not human nature, as the ambiguous word sometimes signifies. For in that innocent sense of mere human nature, our Lord Himself was and is born of the flesh. 'The Word,' as you all rejoice to know, 'was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' But 'flesh,' as our Lord speaks of it to Nicodemus, and as Paul writes of it in all his spiritual epistles, is human nature *fallen*, till it has neither grace nor truth left in it. Flesh, to them, is human

nature poisoned at its very source by sin. It is human nature corrupted and polluted at its heart of hearts beyond all the descriptions of Christ or of Paul or of any one else. It is human nature become the seat of sin and the stronghold of Satan. It is human nature turned into the true and the only bottomless pit. Flesh, in short, is death and hell. Do you wonder then that He who saw all that, and who had been sent to shed His blood in order to change all that; do you wonder that He brushed aside all the hypocritical civilities of the old Pharisee and brought him face to face with the tremendous realities he was trifling with, and he, an old man, on the brink of eternity? He would have been fallen flesh Himself if He had said anything else than just what He did say in that inquiry-room that night, and if He had said it with any less passion than that passion was with which He said it.

But as He also said later on that same night—'God had not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.' And thus it is that having said, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh,' He immediately went to say—'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' It is a universal law, and a law to which there are no exceptions, either in nature or in grace, either on earth or in heaven,—that which is born inherits and holds for ever the same nature as that which begat it and bore it. If you are born of a beast, you have the nature of

a beast. If you are born of a woman, you have the nature of your father and your mother in you; you are a human being. If your father is the devil, then you will dwell for ever with the devil and his angels. And if you are born of God, you are a son of God. In the words of Christ to Nicodemus that night, if you are born of the Spirit of God, then you are a spiritually-minded man. You are a partaker of the divine nature. You are among the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. But the best way to see what it is to be born of the Spirit is to look at Jesus Christ Himself. Look well at the Preacher of that night, if you would understand His sermon. Look well at the Teacher of that night, for He is the best explanation and illustration of His own lesson. Do not look at Nicodemus, nor even at John, no nor even at Paul. Look well at them also. But look first and last at Jesus Christ. THAT is what it is to be born of the Spirit. THAT is what it is to be born again. THAT is what it is to have a spiritual mind. You know to your cost, and to the cost of all who come near you, what it is to be born of the flesh. But look well and look long at Jesus Christ if you would fall in love with the new birth. Look at Him at all times and in all places; and as you look at Him, it is a law of the new birth that you will become like Him. No man can keep looking all his days at Jesus Christ without in the end becoming wholly like Him. In everything like Him; but for instance in things like these. Things like

these take place with you every day, do they not? as they took place with Him. Some one injures you. Some one speaks against you. Some one stands in your way, and obstructs you and surpasses you. Some one despises you and insults you. Some one overlooks you, and treats you with contempt. Some one shows you the basest ingratitude, and denies in the day of your need that he ever knew you. But by this time you have been born again. By this time all these things have become new to you. It is a strange and an unaccountable change to yourself that has come over you; but so it is, and you cannot deny it. You are become meek and lowly in heart. You are strangely loosened off from your former foundations, and you feel inwardly sweet and happy amid all that happens to you. You find yourself, nowadays, actually finding excuses for your enemy. You wonder that he stops there. You are quite sure that God is restraining him else he would say and do far worse things than all that. And when you are near God, of all men in the world, your bitterest enemy, your successful rival, your constant thought, will rise up before you, and your heart will melt for him at the sight of him and at the thought of him at such a time and in such a place. Till the day alone will declare what went up to God from your heart at that secret hour concerning him and his. When once you are born of the Spirit it will be almost as sweet to you to hear your competitor praised and promoted, as it once was to snuff up all that sweet incense to

yourself. Humility and patience also will begin to take the place of high looks and a proud heart. And sudden outbursts of anger will cease with you, and old resentments will decay and will die out. Courtesy and gentleness also will be shed round about you where once you were a proverb of all coarseness of manners and all churlishness. And, perhaps most miraculous of all, there will be times when your first thought will be the glory of God, and the good of your neighbour, till you clean forget yourself altogether. To have looked for these things at one time from you; God and man would sooner have got grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles. But in the new birth a greater transformation than even that takes place. For, before you were born again, no thistle in all the world ever stung like you; and no thorn ever tore, as you used to tear, all who came near you. But now the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

It is no wonder that so many of you are saying at this moment within yourselves,—But can a man be born to all that blessedness when he is as old and is as old in sin, as I am? O yes; you can. Most certainly, you can. Look at Nicodemus. Nicodemus was born again that very night.

He returned to Jerusalem next morning a new creature. It was a quarter to nine, said John Wesley. And by a quarter to nine to-night you may be alone with Christ in your inquiry-room at home. But, far better than that. Our Lord did not let Nicodemus so much as go home. He seized him for his salvation on the spot. Yes; not only will you also be born again to-night; but, old as you are, you will yet live to do Him services that no other disciple will have the courage, and the love, and the liberality to do. Only come to Him, and He will see to all that being fulfilled in you. Do not let your grey hairs keep you back. Do not let the number of your years weigh too much on your mind. Do not let the mountains of your life-time of sin, and your whole chains of such mountains, bar you back. Let all these things the more compel you to Christ on the spot. Yes, on this very spot.

We do not have Nicodemus's narrative of that night. Much less do we have his autobiography after that night. But you can make it up for yourselves out of this chapter, and out of some other precious passages in this same gospel. Till at last you will come to Nicodemus bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight, when Joseph of Arimathea and he took the body of Jesus, and wound it in the linen clothes with the spices. And then with that Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, disappears from earth, till you will compare your experiences of the new birth with him in that

kingdom of God which he has now inherited for evermore. For all who are born again, as Nicodemus was, are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, and shall, with him, inherit the Kingdom of God for ever. Amen!

XIV

HE TAUGHT THEM AS ONE HAVING AUTHORITY AND NOT AS THE SCRIBES

MATT. vii. 29

PREACHING has fallen low enough in our own church and country sometimes, but it has never sunk to such depths of imbecility as the preaching of the Scribes. Their own books, preserved to this day, prove to us that the New Testament, plain-spoken as it is, has not told us the half of the scandal of the life and the teaching of the Scribes and the Pharisees. You would simply not believe the frivolities, and the superstitions, and the downright immoralities of the teaching and preaching of the Scribes and Pharisees, as all these things stand written in their own records. And it was the grace and the truth, it was the wisdom and the beauty of our Lord's teaching and preaching, all taken together with the heavenly holiness of His life, that led Matthew to give us such a full report of the Sermon on the Mount, and then to add to it this conclusion that our Lord did not preach as the Scribes.

To begin with, we see our Lord always practising an ancient rule of the Greek and Roman

oratory, though He had never learned the rules of any oratorical school. Out of the native wisdom of His mind, and out of the pure love of His heart, our Lord always 'captivated the ears of His audiences' at the very opening of all His discourses. What could be more conciliating, and indeed captivating, than the opening words of His very first sermon? What could take hold of a congregation better than the beautiful beatitudes with which He began His great Sermon on the Mount? And what could more completely quiet and console a company of downcast disciples than the whole of that conversation which commenced with the words, Let not your heart be troubled? Let all His servants imitate their Master even in such elementary things as the openings of their sermons. Let them all study the oratorical and evangelical rule of 'captivating' their congregations by the very way they commence. By the psalms they open with. By the Scriptures they open with. And by the first beginnings both of their prayers and their sermons. 'For in giving an exordium at all,' says Quintilian, 'there is no other object but to prepare the hearer to listen to us the more readily in the subsequent part of our pleading. And this object, as is agreed among most authors, is principally effected by three means: by securing the goodwill of the hearer, by securing his attention, and by securing that he shall be desirous of further information. In those ways the ears of our audience must be propitiated by the exordium of our discourse.' Quintilian's

Education of an Orator is to my mind about the delightfulest book of all Greek and Latin antiquity, the most modern also, and the most useful to ministers. And it is full of first-class instruction, cultivation, and entertainment for both old and young.

Cato the censor has this saying on this same subject. 'A great orator is just a good man skilled in speaking; but especially a good man.' And the author of the *Institutes of Oratory* takes that saying of the great censor for a text and composes one of his most beautiful chapters upon it. A chapter that all intending pulpit orators would do well to have by heart. And the other day, when my mind was occupied with this subject, I came on this kindred saying of Phillips Brooks, himself one of the greatest pulpit orators of our time. 'All really great preaching,' he says, 'must have in it both truth and personality.' If that be so, then no wonder that our Lord was such a great preacher. For He was the Very Truth itself. And as for His Personality, you all know what that was. And, then, added to all that, the spotless holiness of His human life as He went out and in among His hearers, completed the authority He had over His hearers. It was not so much His mighty works; it was far more His daily walk and conversation that carried home His preaching with such authority and such winningness and such subduing power. How often your ministers undo both their preaching and themselves by their walk and conversation. By their

'disproportion,' as Richard Baxter calls it in his *Reformed Pastor*. How often their Sabbath day's work is destroyed by their own hands before they are well out of their pulpits. But our Lord's hearers who supped with Him on Sabbath night almost forgot His sermon in the never-to-be-forgotten impression of His presence in private. And you will sometimes even in our own land and day come upon a poor enough preacher as far as mere pulpit eloquence goes, who in spite of that has a large and a happy congregation under him, and has a life-long authority over them. It is his walk and conversation that does it. It is his character, like his Lord's character, that does it. Every congregation cannot have a brilliant preacher in their pulpit. Brilliant preachers are not born of their mothers in sufficient numbers for that. And brilliant preachers must be born, they cannot be made to order. But on the other hand, the Roman censor's 'good man skilled in speaking' should not be so rarely to be found, surely. And to return to Phillips Brooks, whose two qualifications were truth and personality in a preacher. Well, every New Testament preacher has all the truth that our Lord preached, and more, if he chooses. And as for his personality, that will grow in weight, and in impressiveness, and in authority, just in the measure that he becomes a partaker of His Master's holiness. Every preacher, in the measure he preaches the truth as it is in Jesus, and puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, will become clothed with more and more of his

Master's authority, and will wield his authority for the same high ends.

But, genially and winningly as our Lord always began His sermons, He had not gone far till He suddenly plunged into the conscience of every hearer. Our Lord being the Lord of the conscience passed in when it pleased Him and took possession of every hearer's heart and conscience. And that was the reason why our Lord was so pleased with the preaching of John the Baptist. John the Baptist saw little or nothing in his hearers but their sins, and in his preaching he drove at nothing but their guilty consciences. Our great Scottish preachers used to be great at 'law-work,' as it was called; and they had the example and the precept of their Master in that. John the Baptist first, and then our Lord after him, and then Paul after them both, made the law-work more and more to enter the consciences of their hearers. Paul himself would often be like John Bunyan in this that he often went up to his pulpit laden with the chains of the law. But as he went on and preached Christ, his chains melted till he ended his sermon with another Gospel doxology. And whatever else he may be he is no true preacher who does not seize upon his hearers' consciences in every sermon of his. He will drive away all those hearers who have no conscience, and who do not wish to have a conscience, and they will find their way to preachers like themselves of whom there are plenty. But then when they are well away, he will only be the better able to

feed those who remain on the marrow of lions, with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock. Pericles, Plutarch tells us, always left a sting in the conscience of his hearers. And much more will every true preacher do that, as long as there is any secret and unforsaken sin in his hearer's heart and conscience. The conscience was the real seat of our Lord's authority over His hearers, and that preacher's pulpit is planted on the sand who does not preach home in the same way. To other things, also, in their turn, and in their measure; but always to the conscience.

In his delightful lecture on University Preaching, Dr. Newman puts earnestness in the foremost place, even in a University pulpit. Talent, logic, learning, words, manner, voice, action,—all these things, he admits, are required for the perfecting of a preacher. But he holds that there is one thing, very different from all these, but which is absolutely indispensable if the preacher is to have any real influence over his hearers, and is to do his hearers any real good. He must be in earnest. Nor must he aim at earnestness. He may of course work himself up into a pretence, nay into a paroxysm of earnestness. But he who has before his mental eye the Four Last Things will have the true earnestness. His countenance, his manner, his voice, all speak for him, in proportion as his view of the Four Last Things has been vivid and minute.

> Yea, this man's brow, like to a title-leaf,
> Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.
> Thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek
> Is apter than thy tongue to tell thine errand.

And the Four Last Things were all so many sources of our Lord's earnestness and authority in His pulpit. He had the Four Last Things continually before His mental eye. The Four Last Things had brought Him down from heaven to earth. The zeal of the Four Last Things ate Him up. Till they were the four nails that fastened His hands and His feet to the Cross. For the Four Last Things—what could they be but Death, and Judgment, and Heaven, and Hell? With what earnestness, and with what authority, our Lord preached, as often as He took death, or judgment, or heaven, or hell for His text, we all know. Now let every preacher, whatever his talent, whatever his logic, whatever his learning, whatever his manner, whatever his voice, whatever his action; let him, with all these adjuncts or without any one of them, have but his eye sufficiently close upon the Four Last Things, and you will hear of that preacher. Let him stand up in your university pulpit, or at your street corner, and the passer-by will be convinced and judged. The secrets of his heart will be made manifest. And so falling down he will worship God and report that God is in that preacher of a truth. Let the preacher but see in imagination, as his Lord saw, the awful things he preaches about, and that will kindle him into the true earnestness, and the true earnestness will always clothe him with the true authority.

But I have been so taken up with our Lord and His preaching that I have forgotten you, and

the lessons that this Scripture teaches to you. And till I have only time left for one word to you out of this text. And that one word is this. Go and search up and down the whole city and seek out for yourselves and for your children a preacher of authority over you. A preacher who, whatever his Church, and whatever his creed, preaches home to your conscience. If he awakens your conscience in you the first time you hear him, take sittings for yourself and for your children before you go home. And, at any cost and any inconvenience, hold you by his ministry as long as he lays hold and keeps hold of your conscience, and lays bare to you the thoughts and the intents of your heart. That is the true preacher for you; and if I were you, I would go a long Sabbath day's journey to sit under his preaching. And if, in addition, he is made the means of enlightening your mind and the minds of your children in the knowledge of Christ, and of sanctifying and comforting your heart, then the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places; yea, you have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel, you will in these ways learn to say like the Psalmist himself.

XV

OUR LORD'S DISBELIEF IN MANY WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME

JOHN ii. 23-25

THE somewhat startling title of this sermon, as it may sound to some, is nevertheless the literal translation of the original text. The text as it stands in our English translation is in reality a comment on the Greek original. It is a most excellent comment, but still it is a comment rather than a literal rendering. The absolutely literal and word for word rendering is this:—'Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles that He did. But He did not believe in them, because He knew what was in them.'

The evangelist completely disarms us when he anticipates us and admits to us that there are many other things our Lord both said and did but for which he has failed to find room in his book. And among the many left-out things we would have been most thankful to-night for a little about our Lord's miracles and about His preaching on that passover-day. It would have greatly assisted us to-night had the evangelist told

us just what kind of miracles they were that our Lord worked with such effect that passover-day. And still more, just what sermons He preached and on what texts, alongside of His miracles. As well as what manner of men they where who, so immediately, and in such numbers, believed in His name. How many there were of them, and what way they took to tell Him of their faith in His name. And other things like these. But no. About all such things as these the evangelist is silent and tells us not one word, with one exception. With one well-known and notable exception. And that well-known and notable exception was this.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him. Like so many more, Nicodemus had seen the miracles of that passover-day, and had so far believed in His name who worked the miracles. But with all that, as our English has it, our Lord did not commit Himself to Nicodemus; at any rate, at the opening of their interview. Our Lord received all the old ruler's certificates and civilities with a lofty and a severe reserve. And not with a lofty and severe reserve only, but almost with absolute repulse and dismissal. It completely took the old ruler's breath away when our Lord turned on him twice over with this sudden sword-thrust—Except a man be born

again, he cannot enter, or even see, the Kingdom of God. At the same time this man of the Pharisees was ordained to everlasting life, and our Lord did not finally dismiss him that night till He had told him some things that he never forgot. One thing Nicodemus never forgot all his days: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.' You can yourselves feel with what tremendous force these words would come back to Nicodemus when he stood on Calvary and saw the Son of Man lifted up; the very Son of Man who had said these words about Himself that passover-night in Bethany. And then after the Son of Man had been so lifted up, and after He had in that finished the work that had been given Him to do, our Lord committed His dead body to the care of Nicodemus and another lest it should suffer an indignity and a destruction that is not to be thought of.

You will scarcely believe me, but it is literally true. And the more literally we take the whole of this remarkable passage the more lessons will we learn out of it. What do you think is the evangelist's exact and literal word about all the hearing and all the believing of that passover-day? It was not *true believing* at all, says the evangelist, it was all so much *mere theorising*. Yes; our so familiar and somewhat contemptuous word, *mere theorising*, is the evangelist's literal and exact word about the men of that day. And

with such disbelief in them did our Lord meet them, and all their theorisings about Him, that even when their theorisings were right, as they were in this case, He did not commit Himself to them. He had come to save them from condemnation, for they were all condemned already, and He indignantly and sharply resented all their compliments and all their certificates both about His miracles and about Himself. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to heal the broken-hearted, but those patronising hearers of His were as far as possible from being broken-hearted. And thus it was that He so reserved Himself for those to whom He was sent.

And so it is still. The Son of God resents all your praise and all your blame alike. He will have none of them at your hands. He was not sent Himself, and He does not send His servants, that you may talk to one another about them, and theorise on them and on their message, and pay them your fine compliments. When once you are born again, as Nicodemus was, you will come back to Jesus Christ and to His servants with new eyes and new ears and new principles of judgment. But meantime, and till you are born again, your Judge resents you, and all your insolent patronage, as He that night resented Nicodemus.

It was out of His own accumulating experience as a preacher, and it was out of passover-days like that day, that our Lord composed His great parable of the sower and the seed and the various

kinds of ground, good and bad, into which the seed fell. Some seeds fell upon stony places, He said, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root they withered away. Now, those who forthwith spring up under our preaching easily deceive us preachers. We easily believe in those who believe in us and who praise our preaching. We commit ourselves to any and every man the moment he begins to believe in us in that way. But both in committing Himself and in reserving Himself, our Lord had this immense advantage over all other preachers, before or since, that He knew what was in the hearts of all His hearers, and whether they heard Him for the good of their souls, or for some other motive than that.

'Now, I saw that there would be no answer to me till I had entire purity of conscience, and no longer regarded any iniquity whatsoever in my heart. I saw that there were some secret affections still left in me, which, though they were not very bad in themselves, perhaps; yet, in a life of prayer, such as I was then attempting, those remanent affections certainly spoiled all.' That is to say, just what our Lord was in Jerusalem, just that He was in Toledo, and just that He is to-night in Edinburgh. Just what He was to Nicodemus the Pharisee, and to Teresa the Catholic, just that He will be to you the Calvinist. His eyes are still as a flame of fire, piercing to

the thoughts and intents of the heart in man and woman. This will often happen to some of you. After you have taken your Lord's way of it, so far at any rate as to watch one hour with Him as Teresa so continually did; after you have been again and again on your knees, and even on your face, as she so often was; when you put out your light your heart will be as dark and as dreary and as forsaken as if you had been spending the whole of the past hour in actual sin. Now all that is so, simply because at the very back of your mind, and at the very bottom of your heart, there is some remanent affection that has spoiled all. You have not fully and for ever forsaken all your secret sins; and all your tears and all your prayers and all your prostrations will not purchase for you one moment of inward peace. He who alone is your inward peace does not believe in you, nor in your hours of prayer either. And He will keep Himself aloof from you, and will leave you to yourself, till you make you a clean heart. What avails all that praying, demanded poor Brodie of himself, as long as that secret lust of mine remains? It avails just nothing at all. It rather works the other way. David, who has an experimental and an autobiographical light to shed upon everything of that kind, has this long before Nicodemus, or Teresa, or Brodie, or you, or me; this: 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' But, on the other side of all that, listen to what our Lord says to us: 'He that

hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will come to him, and will manifest Myself unto him. If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and will make our abode with him.'

Now, this has been to us once more our pass-over-day. Christ, our passover, has again this day been evidently set forth, crucified among us. And something like this will have taken place among us in this house this day. There will have been those here who sat down at the Lord's Table to-day, and not without some faith in His name. And they sat down much needing some of the strength and some of the comfort that is dispensed to the true and sincere believer at the Lord's Table. But no. Not one atom of strength, not one drop of comfort, came to them. Not one atom. Not one drop. They sat through the Action sermon, and through the Table services; they listened with an unusual attention to all that was said; and they strove and struggled to enter into some experience of God's presence and peace with them. But it all came to nothing. To absolutely nothing. The heavens were as brass, and the earth was as iron. Till, with all they could do, they had to leave the table and stagger home, not only no better, but much worse; much darker, much drearier, much more sad, and much more desolate, than they were before. Now, there is no deep mystery in all that.

There is no dark dispensation of divine sovereignty in all that. The reason of all that is as plain as plain could be. It is all already in the text. He did not commit Himself to them simply because He knew them. Because all their preparations and all their self-examinations were naked and open to Him with whom they have to do. When other intending communicants were at their book and on their knees last week, they were either fast asleep, or were worse employed. Take all the week together, and they did not watch with Him one hour, or spend one penny for His sake upon a spiritual and a preparation book. My brethren; from this Scripture, and from this day's experience of this Scripture, lay this down as a first principle for you, that God is not mocked. And least of all is He mocked any more by those like you at whose hands He has been mocked so often. The whole miserable history of a thousand shipwrecked communions of yours is told to you, and to all the world, in these two or three plain-spoken words; He did not commit Himself to them because He knew what was in them.

But your day of grace is such a long day that it is not even yet at an end. Nor is your present communion-day wholly at an end. And if you make a good use of its remaining hours, who can tell but Christ will commit Himself to you to-night before you fall asleep? As He committed Himself to Nicodemus that night before he fell asleep. And as He committed Himself to the woman at the well some days afterwards. And to

Mary Magdalen. And to Peter, who denied Him so soon after the table. And to the thief on the Cross. And to so many more. Seek you the Lord, therefore, while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near. Behold, I stand at your door and knock. If you hear My voice to-night yet, and open the door, I will come in to you, and will sup with you, and you with Me.

XVI

HOW HIS ZEAL ATE HIM UP

John ii. 17

'THE visual image' of zeal, as Coleridge calls it, is a boiling pot. Ζέω, to boil, is the Greek root of our well-known English word *zeal*. And then, as is the way with all such like words, zeal soon passes over from the material and the sensible world into the intellectual and the moral and the spiritual world. Till we find this so vivid word exclusively made use of to describe a boiling heart; a heart boiling up and boiling over with the intense heat of its own affections, and passions, and emotions. Properly speaking, there is only one kind of boiling water, but there are two entirely opposite kinds of boiling blood. There is the boiling of the blood of a bad heart, and there is the boiling of the blood of a good heart, with all the wholly opposite results that boil over from these so opposite boiling hearts. Now let us glance, to begin with, at some of the bad kinds of boiling hearts, so as to clear our way to the good kinds. To such good kinds as the boiling heart of our Lord, when He made a scourge of small

cords and cleansed the temple, till His disciples remembered that it was written—The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.

The first time that the word zeal, in its bad sense, occurs in Holy Scripture, is in the case of King Saul, that so hot-headed and so God-abandoned man. In his sinful zeal, and in the teeth of the friendly treaty that had been made with the Gibeonites, Saul slew those allies of Israel, and thus brought untold trouble on himself on his family and on his people. 'Come,' said King Jehu also, 'and see my zeal for the Lord.' But all the time Jehu's zeal was wholly for himself, and not for the Lord at all. Jehu was zealous indeed for the Lord's commandments, but all he did was in order that he might be seen of men. As was to be expected we come often both on the name zeal and on the thing itself in the epistles of Paul, that most hot-hearted of men. And both the name of zeal and the thing occur, sometimes in a bad sense, and sometimes in a good sense, in the ardent pages of the Apostle. Speaking in one place of the unconverted Jews, the Apostle says—'I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.' A most pungent, and far-reaching, and much-needed condemnation. For absolutely all the superstitions, and almost all the persecutions, and almost all the divisions that have desolated the Church of Christ from that day to this, are to be traced up to this same wickedness-working zeal without knowledge. And then with all his rare

self-knowledge, and with all his noble honesty of conscience, the Apostle discovers and confesses and denounces that same wicked heat in his own heart. 'Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it. Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.' 'Zeal without knowledge,' says John Foster, in a strong sermon of his on this subject, 'has been one of the most dreadful pests that has ever afflicted the earth. Zeal without knowledge has been the very strength, and soul, and animating demon, of every active evil. View zeal without knowledge in connection with any evil passion; in connection with hatred, with revenge, with love of power, and see what woe it will work!' Again, there is another evil zeal that is not real zeal at all, but is only so much bad temper. This spurious and hypocritical zeal is loud and ostentatious in its defence of this truth and that duty. But all the time, at his heart of hearts, truth and duty are nothing to that bad man but a mere occasion for his own maliciousness and ill-will. Our evil hearts are in nothing more deceitful to ourselves, or more wicked in the sight of God, than just in the way we cloke over our own wicked passions with a mask of holy zeal. When, all the time, underneath that mask, there is little or nothing else but our own malevolence. 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' says our Lord to us. Telling us that if we but knew ourselves, we would see ourselves to be of the spirit of the devil.

Then again there is a true but a mischievously

disproportionate zeal widespread even among the best men. A zeal that is quite out of all keeping with the proper value of the thing pursued, or defended, as the case may be. The thing he takes up may be true enough and good enough so far as it goes, but it is not everything, as the extravagant zealot thinks it is, and will thrust it down your throat that it is. And then the worst of all zeals surely, is that pestiferous zeal for our own party, which is so universal, and is so popular, and is so well-paid among us. This is a zeal also that is not seldom without knowledge, and is determined to remain so. But its real wickedness stands in this rather, that it is absolutely without truth, without justice, and without love. Truth and justice and love live in another world altogether than that world from which that man's so selfish and so truculent zeal is kindled and fed and paid. The absolutely savage zeal of our political, and ecclesiastical, and all our other parties, is the scandal of our public life. And it is enough to drive all good men out of public life altogether. My brethren, I beseech you to watch and pray and labour to keep your hearts and your hands clean of all the detestable vices that are constantly engendered in your hearts by the heat of party spirit. As clean, that is, as is possible in this so divided-up, so hating, and so hateful, and so intolerant world. And, where it is simply not possible always to keep yourselves pure under the constant pressure of this temptation; then, let all these evil things both in

you and in your opponents work in you a more and more weaned, and a more and more broken heart. Always comforting yourselves with this assurance that it is to produce for Himself a people of such weaned and broken hearts that the God of truth and of peace and of love permits such party spirit to poison this world. It is an ennobling and an all-conquering thought that God in His grace has undertaken to make all things, and the heat of party spirit among them, to work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

But it is time to turn to the many good kinds of zeal that are set before us in Holy Scripture. And there are some magnificent anthropomorphisms paid to a holy zeal in the Old Testament and especially in the prophet Isaiah. As thus—'Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.' And this—'He put on righteousness for a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as with a cloke.' And again—'Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory; where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels, and of Thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained?' And then in the new Testament we are familiar with such fine uses of the figure as these:—'Yea, what fear; yea, what

vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge.' And again—'Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' And once more—'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.'

Matthew Henry is always the most shrewd and the most natural and the most forcible of commentators. 'The disciples,' he says, 'were greatly surprised and disconcerted to see the Lamb of God in such a heat that day in the temple. And to see Him, whom they believed to be the King of Israel, taking so little of His kingly state upon Himself as to make, and with His own hands, a scourge of small cords, and with that scourge to drive the money-changers out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen. And, actually, to pour out the changers' money, and overthrow their tables, and all with His own hands. The disciples did not know where to look, or what to say, till this Messianic Psalm came to their minds, the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.'

Now, to be *eaten up* of anything is to this day a very arresting expression. It must have been a very arresting expression when it was first employed. And the arresting original has been rendered literally, and has been used liberally, in our own language ever since. It is indeed a very arresting and even startling thing to hear it said of our Lord that anything could actually *eat Him up*. Yes; but look at Him. Go back and look at Him

that day in the temple. Think you see Him. Think you stand beside Him. Think who He is, and what is His real errand in this world. And the more you think about Him, and the closer you come up to Him, and the better you see Him, the better will you enter into this startling language concerning Him. Yes; such was the dreadful desecration of His Father's house that day, that He was simply eaten up with His indignation at it all. That is to say, all sense of fear at what the rulers of the temple might do to Him was eaten up in our Lord that day. All sense of shame also at what He felt compelled to do was eaten up. All thought and all feeling of the unseemliness of such as He was, condescending to such an act as that in public was all eaten up. All His lamblike meekness also was for the moment wholly eaten up. All these things, and everything else, was wholly eaten up, as the text has it. Such was the wrath of the Lamb at the scene He saw going on in His Father's house that day.

Nor was that a sudden or an occasional and a soon-exhausted ebullition of early zeal on the part of our Lord. Far from that. For just as He began His Messianic ministry in the temple that day, so He carried on His whole ministry, till at last His all-consuming zeal carried Him up to the cross. From the beginning to the end of His life on earth our Lord had no heart left for anything but to fulfil His Messianic mission. In His own words about Himself His meat and His drink was to

finish His Messianic work. It was His holy zeal that both sustained Him and impelled Him all through His life, and the same ruling passion was at its greatest strength in His death. His disciples remembered that Old Testament text in the temple that day. And having once remembered it they were never let forget it again, all the time they companied with Him. And how well they must have remembered it, and must have said it to one another, as they all forsook Him and fled! The zeal of His Father's house hath eaten Him up! they must have said to themselves as they stood afar off and saw His crucifixion consummated.

And then no sooner were the disciples left alone, and no sooner were they all filled with the Holy Ghost, than their Risen Lord demanded of them every day what they had seen in Him every day. The servants were all to be, in this matter also, as their Master. For as He was simply eaten up of His Messianic office, so were they to be eaten up of their Apostolic office. And it was so, in their measure, with them all. Till in their zeal even unto death, they had overcome and had overthrown the Pagan world, and had achieved the spread and the establishment of the Church of Christ. And especially that Apostle of His who had by far the most of his Master's heat of heart in him. You all know how Paul's hot heart absolutely ate him up. Jesus Christ so completely ate up Paul's whole heart that he had not an atom of heart left for anything else. Paul was so eaten

up of Christ that he had no heart left for wife, or for child, or for fame, or for fatherland, or for any of those things that were eating up all other men in that day. Love of power had just eaten up Julius Cæsar. Love of praise had just eaten up Tullius Cicero. Love of liberty had just eaten up Marcus Cato. And love of pleasure Mark Antony. But over against all those great men of that great day stands a far greater than any of them. And his unapproached greatness stands rooted and grounded in his all-consuming zeal for the Son of God, his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So absolutely eaten up was Paul of Jesus Christ that he but spake the simple truth about himself when he said such things as these—'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.' 'To me to live is Christ and to die is gain.' O, greatest of men! O, best of men! O, happiest of men! O, most blessed of men! Well mayest thou appeal and say to all such cold-hearted creatures as we are—'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ!'

Now who here will accept Paul's lofty challenge? Who here is fired to-night with that magnificent emulation and ambition? Are you? Well, the thing is in your own hand. The torch to kindle your own heart to that heavenly heat is in your own hand. And that torch is this—Think about Christ. Just think about Christ, and that will do it. Thinking about one another; meditating on one another; imagining one another,—that makes

your hearts hot towards one another. And so is it with your soul and Christ. Thinking about Him will do it. Meditating on Him will do it. Imagining you see Him will do it. 'My heart was hot within me. While I was musing, the fire burned,' says David. And as often as we muse on Christ the fire burns with us also. And the longer we muse on Him, and the deeper our musing goes, the more the fire burns. And this fire never sinks low, far less ever dies out, as long as we so muse. Thinking enough, meditating enough, musing enough on Christ, will do it. Thinking that always ends in prayer, and in praise, and in repentance unto life, and in ever new obedience, that will do it. Think you see Christ all through the Four Gospels. Think you see Him die at the end of the Four Gospels. Think you see Him rise again. Think you see Him ascend up into heaven. Think that it is the day of judgment. And think you see the books opened,—till you cry to Him continually day and night, Rock of Ages, cleft for me! You have it in your own hand to melt your heart of ice into one pool of holy love. Yes; if you like you can read, and think, and pray yourselves into the possession of a heart as hot as Paul's heart. Ay, into a heart as eaten up of your Father's house on earth and in heaven as Christ's own heart was. For the same Holy Ghost who gave Christ His hot heart, and Paul his hot heart, is given to you also. The time is long till you come to that, but the thing is true. For, behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

upon us. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. Be zealous, therefore, and repent.

XVII

HE SPAKE OF THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY

JOHN ii. 21

AWAY back in the very earliest beginnings of the world a temple was the simplest thing possible. If you would fain see the visual image of the very first temple of all—this was it. The primitive priest came out with his holy measuring-line and with his holy mattock in his hand. And entering the pasture meadow or the harvested field of his tribe, he first ran his holy line around a well-selected spot of ground, and then he dug a deep trench around that spot. And from that day the priest took sole possession of that separated spot and spake of it as his *temple*; his own *cut off* portion. No foot but his own ever crossed that consecrating trench, and nothing was ever done by the hand of man inside that consecrating trench but the offering of sacrifices, and the performance of the other acts of divine worship. As time went on an enclosing and a protecting wall was built; and thus, by degrees, a house of God gradually rose on that sacred site, till, in long after ages, all the magnificence of Solomon's temple, and

all the still greater magnificence of Herod's temple, both stood on that sacred site. But with all that, the most primitive temple of them all has been preserved and perpetuated to us in the very name *temple*. And that, because the very name *temple* etymologically and originally means a portion of the everyday and common ground chosen, cut off, separated, consecrated, built upon, adorned, enriched, and dedicated to the service of God.

Already the text begins to shine out upon us. Already etymology and Christology have met together: grammar and the Gospel have kissed each other. Already a thousand things crowd into my own mind concerning the body and the soul of Jesus Christ. Till, if I shall succeed in telling you a tithe of the things I see in the text you will have cause to bless the text all your days.

We have already gone back to the beginning of Solomon's temple and Herod's temple and all the temples that have ever been built on the face of the earth. Let us now go back, in the light of all that, to the beginning of the temple of His body. Come away back, then, and see the Holy Ghost descending on the Virgin Mary with the measuring-line of election and sanctification in His hand. Look at Him running His holy line around that selected and sanctified portion of Mary's substance, and separating off that selected and sanctified portion of her substance, to be the body and the soul of the Son of God. Till that holy thing that is to be born of her will be the everlasting

temple of God the Son, both on earth and in heaven; both in grace and in glory. But for the descent of the Holy Ghost on the mother of our Lord that body and that soul which constituted her first-born Son would have been like all her other sons. But by that High-Priestly and all-sanctifying act of His, the Holy Ghost anticipated and prevented the profanation of that so privileged portion of our human nature, and for ever secured it for the possession and the service of the Son of God; secured it for Him before aught common or unclean had so much as touched it. And then the Son of God took to Himself that sanctified spot, that sacred site, so to call it, and on it He began to build up such a holy life that by this time be could here speak of it as the temple of His body. 'That body which it hath pleased Him to make His own; that body wherewith He hath saved the world; that body which is the instrument wherewith Deity worketh: the sacrifice which taketh away sin; the price which hath ransomed souls from death; the leader of the whole army of bodies which shall rise again.'

Open your eyes, then, my brethren, and look abroad on the wide waste wilderness of our fallen human nature. And then turn and look at that one selected, separated, and sanctified spot of holy ground at the heart of the vast fallen world of human nature. Look at that separated and prepared temple-site. And then see the Eternal Son of God descending upon it and taking possession of it as a sacred situation on which He begins to

build up a life of sacrifice and prayer, till His body becomes, by reason of all that, the true Temple of God; the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. I have given you Richard Hooker's fine passage on our Lord's body. I will now give you John Howe's fine passage on the owner of that body; the Priest of that temple. 'For here was to be seen a most pure, serene, dispassionate mind, unpolluted by any earthly tincture, inhabiting an earthly tabernacle, like our own; a mind adorned with the most amiable, lovely virtues—faith, patience, temperance, godliness; full of all righteousness, goodness, meekness, mercifulness, sincerity, humility; most abstracted from this world, unmovably intent upon what had reference to a future state of things, and the affairs of another country; inflexible by all the blandishments of sense, not apt to judge by the sight of the eye, or to be charmed by what were most grateful to a voluptuous ear; full of pity towards a wretched, sinful world, compassionate to its calamities, unprovoked by its sharpest injuries; bent upon doing the greatest good and prepared to the suffering of whatsoever evil. Here was presented to common view a Life transacted agreeably to such a temper of mind; of one invariable tenor, equal, uniform, never unlike itself, or disagreeing with the exactest or most strict rules. Men might see a God was come down to dwell among them; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person.' Such, according to John Howe, was He who here speaks of the

temple of His body. Look, then, without ceasing, at your Saviour as He inhabits and ministers in that temple. Never take your eyes off that temple. See Him as He dwelt for thirty-three years on earth in the temple of His body. And then stand near Him on Calvary and see Him offering Himself in that temple as the sacrifice for your sins. And see Him still in that same temple making continual intercession for you at the right hand of God. What a sight is all that! What an enlarging, enriching, ennobling, enrapturing sight is all that! The sight of the temple of His body, and of all the High Priestly offices He carries on for us in the temple of His body.

But the half of this great sight has not yet been seen. And John Howe begins the best half for us of his 'Living Temple' when he begins to treat of our Lord's body as a 'seminal' temple. That is to say, our Lord's temple-body is the seed, so to speak, of a like body and soul to ourselves. Now if that is to be the future destiny of our bodies, then they will all seminally and successively go through the very same operations and experiences that the body and the soul of our Lord went through. At our new birth, which corresponds to the descent of the Holy Ghost on the mother of our Lord, He again takes into His hand the very same instruments that He employed in His delimitation of our Lord's body and soul, till our bodies and our souls all undergo that very selection, and separation, and dedication, that our Forerunner's body and soul underwent. And then the Holy Ghost takes

us and ordains us as so many kings and priests over our own bodies and souls. That is to say, over that marked-off, consecrated, and dedicated portion of human nature which our bodies and our souls now are. And it is on this strong ground that the Apostle takes his stand in these so impressive appeals of his: 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price.' And, again, 'Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' And thus it comes about that the whole society of the regenerate is looked on as one great and united temple; Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

And then when it is taken in the line of all that, and read in the light of all that, there is no passage in all the Book of Revelation more noble, more magnificent, or more full of all blessedness to us, than just this passage: 'And I saw no temple therein.' That is to say, there is no spot in all heaven that is holier or happier than all the rest of heaven. The whole new heaven and new earth will be so holy and so happy in their holi-

ness, that a holier or happier place will not be possible. The Holy Ghost will for ever lay aside His sacred measuring-line in heaven. No place will be found there for His separating and sanctifying work. All His separating and sanctifying work will be finished and at an end before that time. No; there will be no temple there, and no priest, and no altar, and no sacrifice, for there will be no sin there. Till both the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost Himself, all three will unite in saying of the new heaven and the new earth, and still more of the temple-body and temple-soul of every glorified saint: This is My rest; here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

Fellow believers! My truly dear brethren! Have you understood all that to-night? Have you received all that to-night? Have you taken all that to heart to-night? And is your soul full of holy joy over all that to-night? For it is something to be very joyful for. It is something to lay well to heart. This may well be a night to be remembered by us all. And it will be if we have laid to heart our Lord's teaching to-night concerning the temple of His body. What a wonderful journey we have made in this house to-night! The wings of the strongest angel of them all have been far outstripped to-night. From the primitive priest, with his measuring-line, and his turf-cutting knife in his hand, on through all his sacred spots, and circles, and groves, and gardens, and cloisters, and churches, and temples, and altars, down to our own day. And then on through the annunciation of

Gabriel, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the mother of our Lord; on through our Lord's holy birth, His holy life, the sin-atoning sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, His entrance into the holy place with His own blood, and His continual intercession for us. And then on through our own new birth, separation from sin, spiritual priesthood over body, soul, and spirit, till we shall be presented before God without spot or blemish. And then our abundant entrance into heaven itself, when we shall leave all our limited temples of all kinds behind us for ever. Yes, truly; what a journey we have made to-night! What sights we have seen! What words we have heard! And most of all, what manner of men must we ourselves henceforth be! And what diligence must ours be that we may enter in through the gates into the city! Till we shall see His face and His name shall be in our foreheads. 'And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And I saw no one temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

XVIII

GOD GIVETH NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT BY MEASURE UNTO HIS SON

JOHN iii. 24

IT must often have struck you with wonder that not one word is said in the whole of the New Testament about our Lord's intellect; only always about His heart. The four Gospels say not one syllable about our Lord's bodily appearance; no nor one syllable about the talents and the endowments of His mind. Neither the strength of His understanding, nor the tenacity of His memory, nor the brilliancy of His imagination, nor the eloquence of His speech —not one of all these things is ever once referred to; only the meekness, and the lowliness, and the tenderness of His heart. I am not naming them in the same day with our Lord. But the moment I go to the Bible and name to you Moses, or Isaiah, or John, or Paul; or go outside the Bible and name to you, say Plato, or Dante, or Shakespeare, or Newton, or Edwards, you immediately think of the magnificent minds of those men. The strength, the grasp, the height, the depth,

the beauty, the originality, the attainments, and the performances of those men; in one word, the amazing minds of those men at once rise up before you. But after what cast our Lord's human mind was made; to what family of minds His human mind belonged, if it belonged to any of our families of mind; of all that we read not one word. Nor are we ourselves able, after all our study of our Lord, to say a single word about the peculiar talents or special endowments of His human mind. Not one word. Only, every page of the four Gospels is full of the meekness and the lowliness and the love of His heart. Every page, both of the four Gospels and of all the Epistles, is overflowing with His amazing humility, His obedience unto death, and His unquenchable and unconquerable love to God and man. In one word it is the holiness of our Lord's heart that fills the New Testament full and makes it the unparalleled and unapproachable Book that it is.

It is never once said that our Lord had mind without measure, though I must suppose that was so. The one thing that it is ever said He had without measure was the Spirit of God. Whatever was the nature and the degree of His mind and His understanding; both His mind, and His understanding, and His heart, were all filled with the Holy Ghost as full as they could hold. Our Lord's whole human spirit within Him was simply steeped in the Spirit of God. His whole inner man was so saturated, as we say, with the Spirit of His Father that it was no more the man Jesus

of Nazareth, with His inherited mind and heart, that spake and acted; it was much more the Holy Ghost who spake and acted in Him. He said it long before Paul said it: 'I live, yet not I, but the Spirit of My Father liveth in Me; and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the power and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.' Till the fruit of the Spirit in Jesus Christ was, as never before nor since, love without measure, joy without measure, peace without measure, long-suffering without measure, gentleness, goodness, faith, and all the other fruits of the Spirit, and each one of them without measure. Every fruit of the Spirit you ever read or heard of was found in its season in the life of our Lord, and all without measure. 'There is no grace,' says John Owen, 'that is not to be found in Christ; and every grace is in Him in its highest degree. The grace of God was not in Christ in parcels, and in first beginnings, as it is in us. But in Him Divine grace was in all things, and at all times, without measure.' We have so little experience of this in ourselves that it is beyond us. It is too high for us. It is too deep for us and we cannot wade out into it. We cannot with all our effort, so enter the mind and the heart of our Lord as to watch and write down all the operations of the Holy Ghost on the inner man of our Lord. We cannot place the mind and heart of our Lord under our scrutiny, so as to say just how the Holy Ghost took such full possession of our Lord as He did; our Lord all the time remaining Himself, and not suffering complete

absorption and annihilation into God. The absolute and entire sanctification of our Lord, body, soul, and spirit, will all our life here be a great mystery to us. Only, this is a sure rule for us to go by, both in our Lord's case, and in our own —out of the heart are the issues of life. Now, we know, and it is our best knowledge, what were the issues of our Lord's sanctified heart. Go through the four Gospels and you will come on every page on His love, and on His joy in God, and on His peace, and on His meekness, and on His gentleness; in one word, on the Holy Ghost within Him without measure. You may read, and read, and read, but you will never once think of your Lord's intellectual talents; you would feel it to be something almost akin to irreverence and sacrilege were such thoughts to enter your mind about your Lord. But it is not so when you are arrested by the graces of His heart. You cannot dwell too much on the graces of His heart. You cannot too much put adoring words on the graces of His heart. You cannot too much extol and proclaim and preach the graces of His heart. And the heavenliness and the holiness of His heart will shine out of every page of your New Testament, and will shine into your own heavenly mind and holy heart, till you are changed into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, it has never been said about any other human being in this world but Jesus of Nazareth, that God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. The man Jesus Christ is alone in that and

He has no fellow in that. God has given of His Spirit to many men, first and last, but never to any other man without measure. This is God's appointed way with the children of men, and He has never deviated from this way, and never will. He gave His Holy Spirit without measure to His incarnate Son our Lord, and then our Lord measures out the Holy Spirit to us. It is as Paul has it: 'But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' We are all alike to begin with. Unlike as we are in everything else; in body, in mind, in estate, we are all alike in our need of the Spirit of God. Our spirits are all so depraved. Our spirits are all so full of the spirit of evil. We are all such born sinners in this respect that in reality there is no difference among us. We are all alike in the darkness, in the depravity, and in the ungodliness of our minds and our hearts. But when Christ, out of His fulness, begins to give us grace, one by one, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, the greatest differences begin to show themselves among us; and differences that will never be removed and equalised in this world; nor till we all receive the Spirit without measure in the world to come. You cannot open your eyes without seeing both in yourselves and in your neighbours how the graces of the Holy Spirit are measured out to God's people according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Take love; take pure, holy, God-like, Christ-like love. And with what different measures is that great grace of the

Spirit measured out, even to true saints! How rich one saint will be in brotherly love compared with another saint. Some are all but living epistles of love, such a measure have they received of this gift of Christ. Take joy again; and some men seem continually to overflow with that grace of the Spirit; while other men have not an atom of it. There is, and there would need to be, a special benediction reserved for those who mourn. For there are some men that we cannot deny to be true disciples, if not eminent saints, who have not one drop to be called joy in all their cup. Let them go on to pray and obey till they attain to some rich measure of this sweet gift of Christ. Take peace, again; and you will come on some men who have this heavenly grace almost without measure. Peace comes and dwells where they dwell. Peace so reigns in their hearts that they make peace wherever they go. Blessed are such peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God; even as the great Peace-maker Himself is called the Son of God. And then to another the measure of the gift of Christ is in the gentleness of Christ. His is the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, then gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. Till that pure and gentle spirit does more to commend Christ and His Holy Spirit than all the pulpits in the city. And so also of faith. There are some saints who are strong in faith, giving glory to God. Nothing that God says or does ever staggers them. They

never doubt, and they never question; they pray and they are answered, till their faith is better than sight. At the same time it remains undeniably true that all God's people have and hold each his own special gift and grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And John Owen's comment on that text will always hold true: 'Grace at its best is in us but in parcels, and in first beginnings. While all grace was in Christ without measure.'

The prince of my pulpit exegetes says, and himself acts on the saying, that 'the right context of a scripture is half the interpretation.' And again, 'The Word of God hath a harmony of reason in it, and if a man would open a place of Scripture, he should do it rationally; he should go and consider the words before and the words after.' Now when I go and consider the context of to-night I see that it is not said in a large and general and universal way that God giveth the Spirit without measure to His Son. That is absolutely true in the largest the most general and the most all-embracing sense; but that is not the immediate and particular truth of this immediate and particular Scripture. The immediate and particular truth of this present text and context is this,—that what our Lord says in His sermons, and in His exhortations, is to be absolutely depended on, because God giveth not His Spirit of truth by measure unto His Preacher-Son. Our Lord's personal holiness is not the matter here in hand; it is rather His official fitness. The matter

here in hand is His pulpit rather than His person. He has received the Spirit of truth in such an unmeasured way that what He says may be relied on to everlasting life. Now, when we both rationally and spiritually apply all that to ourselves, we get this excellent lesson, and we take home this much-needed comfort. When God puts us into some office of His appointment, and lays some duty of His ordination upon us, we are entitled to look to Him for the Spirit of that office, and for the special gift and the special grace that duty demands of us. And for the very Holy Spirit Himself, if not absolutely without measure, yet to such a measure as shall correspond to the importance of our office and the arduousness of our duty. Matthew Henry, another prince of pulpit exegetes, speaking on God giving king Saul another heart, says: 'Saul has no longer the heart of a husbandman, concerned only with corn and cattle; he has now the heart of a statesman, a general, a prince. When God calls to service He will make fit for it. If He advances to another station, He will give another heart; and will preserve that heart to those who sincerely desire to serve Him.' Now if that is a rule in the kingdom of heaven; if that is a principle that God goes upon in putting men into offices and undertakings, what an encouragement, what a comfort that is to all those men whom He has put into high duty in the state, like Saul, or into high office in the Church, like Christ. If you are a statesman, God will give you a statesman's

heart. If you are a general, a general's heart. And if you are a prince, a prince's heart. As, also, if He ordains and sends you to be a preacher like His Son, or whatsoever He makes you in the Church, in the state, in the family, or anywhere else, He will give you another heart, like Saul; He will give you the Spirit, according to the gift of Christ. And then this gift of Christ for your office in the Church, and the state, and the family, rightly laid out to usury by you will turn inwards into your own soul, till your outward office will be an eminent means of your inward holiness. And till the gift of Christ for your temporal work will remain in you as your eternal wages. As Matthew Henry has it: 'He will give you another heart, and He will preserve that heart to you, if you sincerely desire to serve Him.'

And now to come back for one moment to where we began, and so close. It must often have struck you that not one word is said in the whole of the New Testament about the greatness of our Lord's intellect, only always about the goodness of His heart. And in the same manner, there are none of our fulsome eulogies in the New Testament on any man's mental gifts or attainments; only thankful acknowledgments of God's mercies on this man and that man's soul. In the New Testament, not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. At that time Jesus answered, and said: I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast

revealed them unto babes. Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He hath promised to them that love Him? Not that great intellect is not of God. Not that a strong and a sane understanding, and a piercing mind, and a soaring imagination, and a treasure-house of a memory, are not all of them so many sparkles in this and that man of the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Only, that the evangelical graces of the heart rank far higher in the kingdom of God than the things of the intellect that so dazzle us. At the same time, the sounder and the stronger his understanding, the more stored his memory with the best reading and learning, and the more far-seeing and high-soaring his imagination, the more meek and lowly in heart will that disciple of Christ be. Who so meek, and so lowly, and so filled with all the fulness of the Spirit of holiness, as our Lord; and after Him His most intellectual and spiritual apostle? There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But covet earnestly the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but

rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things; charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto charity.

XIX

OUR LORD AS A BELIEVING MAN

MATT. iii. 17. HEB. xi. 6

'THIS is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. . . . But without faith it is impossible to please Him.'

The workings of our Lord's human mind, the affections and the emotions of our Lord's human heart, and all the spiritual experiences of our Lord's human life—take Jesus Christ in all these things, and He is the most absorbing, the most satisfying, and the most sanctifying study in all the universe. There is no other doctrine in heaven or on earth for one moment to compare with the doctrine of God in Christ and Christ in God: the Word made flesh, and the flesh made God. And, then, to as many of us as by His grace to us are true believers on Him and in His blood, our Lord's own faith in His Father and in His Father's word to Him is a subject of the intensest interest, the most edifying meditation, and the most transporting reflection. To as many of us as believe there is no subject in heaven or on earth like our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the

true learning. This is the true knowledge. This is the true science and philosophy; and not falsely so called. This is the wisdom that cometh from above. This is the wisdom of God in a mystery. This, O Father, is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.

Even in the Old Testament, and in some respects and for some reasons, even more in the Old Testament than in the New, the coming Messiah is already set before Israel as the Prince of believers, and as the perfect pattern to all believers, both Old Testament and New. Take the Messiah, for instance, in two well-known Psalms that were specially prepared for Him. In the sixteenth Psalm David is inspired to speak in the name of the promised Messiah in these splendidly believing words: 'I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.' There spake the incomparably believing Man Jesus Christ, long before He was born. And, again, just listen to the Man of sorrows, and at the same time the Prince of believers, as He speaks concerning Himself in the twenty-second Psalm: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they

shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that He would deliver him; let Him deliver him, seeing he trusted in Him. But Thou art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be Thou not far from me, O Lord; O my strength, make haste to help me.' The four evangelists themselves have nothing to surpass that, first for an unparalleled sorrow, and then for the unparalleled victory of Messiah's faith. And then, in the greatest of the Messianic prophets: 'The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned I away back. I give my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that pulled off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; and who shall contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is mine adversary? Let him come near unto me.' When Paul's faith for himself and for all believers is at its most rapturous and its most defiant, he borrows these bold words out of the mouth of the absolutely assured Messiah, and applies them to the most advanced and assured and victorious of evangelical believers. And no wonder. For,

what a faith is here, even in the thickest darkness! What a full assurance of a divine faith is here, even on the cross!

And, then, when the Messiah actually came in the flesh He sought out all those Scriptures concerning Himself, and took them home to Himself, and believed them, and made every jot and tittle of them His very own. Sabbath by Sabbath, day by day, and hour by hour, Jesus of Nazareth read in the Psalms and in the Prophets the things that were written there concerning Himself, till His Father's word was more to Him than His necessary food. He may not indeed from a very child have made much of the Messianic Scriptures. It was impossible that as long as He spake as a child, and understood as a child, and thought as a child, He could enter into the full appropriation to Himself of all these so deep and, some of them, so dreadful Scriptures. But when He became a man, He read day and night, and nothing else but the deepest Messianic Scriptures; and at every fresh reading He made them more and more His own, and made Himself more and more their own, till at last He came to the full assurance of His Messiahship, by more and more performing the duties of the Messiahship, and by more and more clothing Himself with the whole walk and conversation of the Messiahship. And our Lord's faith in all these things so worked by an equal love that He was always found both ready and willing to fulfil, and to have fulfilled in Himself,

all the Messianic Scriptures concerning Himself. 'Lo, I come!' was never out of His mouth, from the beginning down to the end. Even on the cross He still delighted to do His Father's will. Yea, the law of our redemption was to the end deeper in His heart than anything else. As in Messianic prophecy, so in the days of His actual flesh, our Lord was by far the greatest and the best of believers. He was the very author and finisher of faith. If He was not actually the first of all believers in point of time, no sooner did He begin to believe than He sprang at once to the forefront of faith, till He was the most perfect, and complete and completely God-pleasing believer in all Israel. Abraham himself, the father of the faithful, would have resigned his supreme place in the life of faith in favour of Jesus Christ, but for the best of reasons to Abraham himself and to us. But, even after the coming of Christ, and even after Christ's life of incomparable faith, Abraham still holds his God-given place. For, at his very best, and to the very end, Abraham was but a believing sinner, and thus an ever more and more justified man. But Jesus Christ was, to begin with, and much more was He at His end, a believing saint and a justified surety. He had this prerogative over Abraham, and over all Abraham's believing seed, that He knew no sin. And thus it was that He did not need, like Abraham and all his seed, to believe on God for the forgiveness of sin, and for justification of life. And therefore it is that Abraham keeps his place, and will keep it to

the end, as the father of all those who submit to be justified by faith. But the life of faith in all its aspects is so large and so rich that there is plenty of room in it both for Abraham and for Jesus Christ and for you and for me.

First in His believing study and believing appropriation of the Messianic Scriptures, and then in His life of unceasing and believing prayer, our Lord stands at our head as the author and finisher of faith. And not more in His believing reading of the word than in His believing prayer and intercession continually. 'Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.' Day and night, early and late, our Lord lived and moved and had His being in believing prayer. He could never have entered on His great work, far less could He ever have finished it, but for His faith in His father as the Hearer of prayer. At every successive step in the process of our redemption, He took that step after a season of prayer, till He had fulfilled in His own experience what He preaches with such point to us concerning believing prayer. Preaching clearly and undeniably from His own experience in prayer, He says to us in one great place—in the greatest, indeed, of all Scripture places — concerning prayer: 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' There is a window opened into our Lord's secret life of

prayer in these wonderful words—words much too wonderful for the best believer among us, but true to the letter of Him and of His faith in His Father. 'I know,' He said to His Father, at the grave of Lazarus, 'I know that Thou hearest me always. But because of the people that stand by I said it, that they might believe that Thou hast heard Me.' Such close communion of faith, and such strong assurance of faith, was there between the Father and the Son in the Son's life of believing reading and believing praying.

But, after all, it was in Gethsemane and on Calvary that the faith of our Substitute came to its absolute perfection. Loaded down to death and hell with the sin of the world, our Saviour's faith in His Father's sure word of promise was such that his burdened heart rose victorious above all the tremendous load that was laid upon Him. Our Saviour had the fullest assurance of faith; the fullest assurance that His Father who had begun such a good work in Him and by Him would not leave it till He had perfected it in the day of Christ. And thus it was that, as Bengel says, 'the most fragrant part of Christ's sin-atoning sacrifice was His unshaken trust in His Father's faithfulness and love.' Not only did our Lord's faith not give way even under the tremendous strain of His sin-atoning death: His faith was so strong that it actually blossomed up into absolute joy even in His hottest agony. For we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the fact, that it was for the joy set before His faith that

enabled our Lord to endure the Cross, and to despise the shame. And then, when His darkness was at its very darkest, His last words out of the thick darkness were these: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' If the centurion had known all that we know, with how much more wonder would he have said, 'Certainly this was a righteous man! Truly this man was the Son of God!' Our Redeemer died, having been made a curse for sin; but all the time He died without a shadow of doubt in His soul that both He Himself, and all for whom He so died, would be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment. Truly the centurion would have said, had he known all, 'This is the author and finisher of faith!'

Now, my brethren, after all that is said—and the half has not been said of our Lord's life and death of faith—at the same time, in some ways you and I have the privilege and the opportunity of being even greater believers than our Lord ever was. It may well have been of your faith and mine that He was speaking and foreseeing when He said that some of His disciples would do greater works than He had ever done. It is true, He believed and rested His soul on His Father's word of grace and truth to Him, even when He was laden with sin to a bloody sweat and to the darkness of death and hell. But, then, He had this comfort at His very worst, that the sin under which He was dying was not actually His own sin. Our worst sins, and all our sins, were imputed to

Him and were actually laid upon Him, and He took them up to make atonement for them as if they had been His own. But all the time they were not His own; they were yours and mine. His suretyship guilt was not a real, and an actual, and a genuine, and a never-to-be-forgotten guilt like yours and mine. And thus it comes about that, in some ways, we can magnify the grace of God, and can attain to victories of faith and trust that were not open to our Lord, who knew no sin as we know it. And, indeed, it is just here that the characteristic and essential genius of justifying faith comes out, and makes itself to appear in all its trials and triumphs. The worse our case is, under the Gospel the more able are we to adorn the doctrines of grace and to magnify its saving power, if only we aright and enough believe in the God of grace and in His word of promise. His Son, no doubt, magnified His Father's grace and His word of promise to the very utmost possible to Him by His life and death of the most perfect faith and trust. But you and I can magnify the grace and the promises of God in a way altogether personal and peculiar to ourselves. The darker, the more accumulated, the more aggravated our guilt is, the more will mercy rejoice over judgment in our forgiveness and salvation. Where sin abounds there grace much more abounds, when we exercise faith according to our sin and according to God's grace. 'It is of faith,' says the Apostle Paul, 'that it might be by grace.' Only believe that you have to do with a God who delighteth in

mercy, and you will, by your faith, bring a tribute of glory to God that only a sinner, and a great sinner, can ever bring. A tribute of glory—shall I take boldness to say?—that His sinless Son could not possibly bring, or could only bring through you. Only believe in the infinite grace of God the Father, and in the infinitely precious blood of His Son, and you will thus glorify God far more than you have ever dishonoured Him. And how great will that glory be!

Walter Marshall, one of our deepest divines, says in his 'Twelfth Direction' that 'Christ walked in a constant persuasion of His excellent state, and it was that constant persuasion that carried Him through.' And Marshall presses it upon all his believing readers that they are to walk in the same 'constant persuasion.' And he bases his great counsel on this great evangelical ground, that we are all complete in Christ; complete as Christ was complete. In fact, that we stand, if we will only believe it, in the very same 'excellent state' as that was in which Christ stood. Yes; we stand now in His state, just as He at one time stood in our state. And it is by believing that, and by realising that, and by continually acting upon that, that we shall best please God with us, and best adorn the doctrine of His Son. In fact, without this faith in Christ, and in our 'excellent state' in Christ, it is impossible for any sinner to please God. We are to act, continues Marshall, 'as those who are raised in Christ altogether above and beyond

the sphere and range of nature, and are advanced to union and communion with the Son of God.' Believe that, believers. Practise believing that. Read and hear about that, and about little else but that: say to your own dark and doubting hearts that it hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all your fulness dwell. Say it, and believe it, and take your stand upon it. Not Paul and Luther and Marshall only, but you, their constant readers, are with them complete in Christ. And if you feel that you need more out of Christ's completeness than they or the like of them could ever need, then that will only enable you to magnify the grace of God more than they all. Believe that, believers. Bring the whole of the scriptures of promise, and the whole of your life of believing reading and believing praying to bear upon that. And if your great and singular sinfulness threatens sometimes to shipwreck your faith altogether, at such seasons cast your anchor into deeper seas of salvation than you have ever yet sounded. And the grace of God, and the blood and righteousness of Christ, and a corresponding faith in your soul, all these things will be seen to work in you a miracle of salvation hitherto unheard of. You also will be saved everlastingly from all your sin as sure as God has promised, and Christ has died and has risen again, if you will only believe. And you should have no difficulty in believing anything and everything of that kind, since all such faith is the gift of God.

I often entertain myself and regale my great taste for words, and especially for the words that the Holy Ghost teacheth, by repeating to myself the two last times in which we shall be spoken of under this great designation of 'believers.' 'The souls of believers,' I say to myself fifty times every day, 'are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.' And then, following that up: 'At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.'

If that is to be so, who would not live and die, like Jesus Christ, a believer?

XX

HIS MEAT

John iv. 34

NOW Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey sat thus on the well. For His disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat. And upon this came His disciples and prayed Him, saying: Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. These words of their Master at once threw the disciples, and they throw us, into another world of things altogether than our everyday world of hungering and thirsting, and eating and drinking. His Father's will, and His Father's work, had taken such possession of our Lord during those two or three hours at the well that He had clean forgotten all about His former hunger. And He only makes this use of His former hunger, and of the food now spread out before Him, to point out a great spiritual lesson to His disciples and to us. Bring the word to the water, and you thereby make a sacrament, said St. Augustine. And when

our Lord brought that word of His about His Father's will and His Father's work to that meat which the disciples had brought from the city, that meat that moment became to Him, and to them, so much sacramental meat. That moment that meat became a means of grace and truth to all who heard and understood His wonderful words that day. Till every day during the rest of their time with Him in this world His disciples must have remembered their Master's words which He spake at the well: 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.'

At the same time, that at the well was by no means the first occasion on which our Lord had fallen back on the familiar figure of food, in order to set the true source of His spiritual strength before His disciples. He had already met the tempter in the wilderness with these words out of Moses: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' As much as to say—Bread is necessary to every man's life, but bread is not man's only necessity. Man is made up of body, and soul, and spirit. And, what bread is to a man's body, God Himself is to that man's soul. Job also said a fine thing in this matter. 'I have esteemed the words of Thy mouth,' he said, 'more than my necessary food.' In saying that, Job admitted that his daily food was necessary to him. But he protested at the same time that the words of God's mouth had to him a high and a sovereign necessity. 'But then as to the words of God's mouth

to us,' says Luther, 'the words of God's mouth are not so many merely grammatical vocables. The words of the mouth of God are true, and actual, and essential *things*. The sun and the moon; the heavens and the earth; Peter and Paul; you and I, are all so many words of God.' And, in the same way, the name of the LORD is not a mere grammatical vocable. The true name of the LORD is so many divine attributes, and every attribute in its full operation. The true name of the LORD is made up of these divine vocables, so to call them —'Merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and in truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Now, it was in giving to His disciples, and to all men, these words of His Father; it was in manifesting these names of His Father that the Son of God found His meat and His drink. Till every returning day brought His Father's will in these matters to our Lord for His daily bread. And thus it was that His mid-day meal that day was this conversation of His with the woman who had come out of the city to draw water.

Now we are very happy in having some of the crumbs that fell from our Lord's table that day gathered up into the evangelist's bread-basket, which now stands open before us. If then you would like to taste some of your Lord's meat that day at the well, just read, with a spiritual mind, the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. Just pass your spiritual mind into your Saviour's spiritual mind as He talked these spiritual things with

that woman, and you will understand at once what He meant when He said to His disciples that He had meat to eat that they knew not of. For that hour's conversation at the well had so completely recruited and refreshed and even regaled our Lord, that He had clean forgotten that He had ever been hungry, or athirst, or aweary. He had had such a banquet, as of marrow and fatness, while His disciples were gone to the city, that He turned away, almost as with loathing, from the meat they now came and spread out before Him. So does the full soul loathe even the honeycomb. And as He began in the wilderness and at the well so He continued all His days on earth. His mission from His Father; His offices towards us; His life of holy obedience; and His death of atonement for our sin; these things completely absorbed, and absolutely possessed our Lord, till He was able to finish His work with such scriptures as these for His daily bread: 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My heart and my flesh faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

God is the treasure of my soul,
  The source of lasting joy;
A joy which want shall not impair,
  Nor death itself destroy.

Now, all that is written for our learning. All that is written in order that we may take it and apply it to ourselves. And, far behind our Lord as we are in all these things, at the same time

we are not wholly without some little beginnings of the same mind. Even we ourselves sometimes forget to take our food in our love for our work. Was it not Archimedes who was so absorbed in his geometrical problems that his scholars could not get him to eat the dish that stood cold before him? And did not Pericles say in one of his great orations that an Athenian's best holiday was just that day on which he had done his duty best? And is not a good conscience toward our proper work a continual feast to ourselves? Even as a bad conscience toward our proper work—all the corn and wine in the world will not make up for it. Our proper work not done is starvation and a prison and a rack to us. You yourselves have often been like Archimedes. You have often been so possessed with your work that you had meat to eat of which your idle neighbours round about you knew nothing. Till you felt in such love with your work, and got so much true strength and satisfaction out of your work, that as you toiled on at your work you sang and said:

> Blest work! if thou dost bear God's curse,
> What must His blessing be!

And even in the taking of our necessary food, we completely forget that we are taking it, when we are in agreeable company, and are absorbed in delightful conversation. One of Lord Ardmillan's daughters used to say of her genial and gentlemanly father that he breakfasted on the newspapers and dined on conversation. All his guests who

remain well remember how his Lordship had always meat to eat far other than that which lay spread about on the table. And his well-remembered words of wisdom, and truth, and love were more to those who sat beside him than their necessary food. Lord Ardmillan, as we well remember, was like Job himself in the intensity of his love for the words of God's mouth.

The Bible is both meat and drink to all who have learned to read it aright. Even a single book of the Bible will sometimes be a perfect banquet to him who reads it aright; even a single chapter of it; even a single verse of it, sometimes. David could not have had many books of the Bible, and he could not have had the best of its books, but listen to what a feast he made out of what he had. 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! And my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.' Now, what do you say to that? You have far more marrow and fatness than David ever had, and what do you say to God and man about it all? Surely you are not silent toward God about it all. But David is not alone in his rapturous delight in his Bible. Listen to the prophet Jeremiah also. 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and they were unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart.' And Ezekiel, also: 'Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with the roll that I give thee.

Then did I eat it, and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.' Now, how is all that with you? How is it between you and your Bible? Can you honestly speak in that way about your Bible? Is God, whose book it is, your witness that neither Job, nor David, nor Jeremiah, nor Ezekiel, nor any other man, can give you warm enough words wherewith to speak about your Bible?

In the composition of Holy Scripture holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And in so speaking they have brought such strength and such consolation, such meat and such drink to our hearts, that we name their very names with what is little short of divine honour and love. Till we advertise and tell all men how deep, beyond all counting up, is our debt to David, and to John, and to Paul.

> Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?

And the poet gives for his answer the names of three ancient and classical authors. Now, do you put the same question to me? Do you ask me who prop my mind in these bad days of mine? You have my answer already. David props my mind, and John, and Paul; especially Paul. In my very worst days I lean on Paul, and he holds me up, and never fails me. The poet's three boasted props are so many broken reeds to me. I have tried them, all three, in my time, and they have always failed me. But Paul never fails me, even in my very worst days, and even when worse

days there could not be. Or, rather, He never fails me whose ambassador Paul always is to me. No man living needs such a strong prop as I need. And I can say with a corresponding experience, and assurance, and absoluteness of confidence: Come with me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will show you where I always find rest. And where you also shall find rest unto your souls. Your fathers did feed upon poetry and philosophy and fiction in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Yes. But, as we are in this world, we cannot make these things our meat. That wearied Man at the well could, but we cannot. No mere man, since the fall of Adam, could make the pure and immediate will and work of God his meat. The very opposite. The man which doeth these things, he shall live by them. But when any mere man, when any sinful man, tries to live by doing the will and the work of God,—'The commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death.' But Christ could and did live under the commandment that was ordained to life. And then

such was the will and the work of God toward us that His death; that is to say, the flesh and the blood of Christ, are made of God our proper and true meat and drink, as we are sinners. And now we as we are sinners, live by Him. That is to say, in His own words, we live by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Wonderful! is it not? Amazing! is it not? An everlasting study in God, and in Christ, and in sin, and in salvation! is it not? Yes. Here is philosophy, and that not falsely so called. Come all you who seek wisdom and you will find it here. You will find it all in Him who is made of God to you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain-head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

XXI

THE SON OF MAN HATH NOT WHERE TO LAY HIS HEAD

MATT. viii. 26

Thou shalt leave each thing
Belov'd most dearly; this is the first shaft
Shot from the bow of exile. Thou shalt prove
How salt the savour is of others' bread,
How hard the passage to descend and climb
By others' stairs. But what shall gall thee most
Will be the worthless and vile company
With whom thou must be thrown into these straits.
For all ungrateful, impious all, and mad,
Shall turn against thee; but in a little while
Theirs and not thine shall be the crimson'd brow.

WITHOUT the change of one single syllable that might have been the aged Simeon's prophecy when he came by the Spirit into the temple and took the Child Jesus up in his arms. For the very first shaft that was shot into our Saviour's soul was His utter loneliness, even in His mother's house. With all that had gone before His birth, and with all that had followed after His birth; with His sweet and winning nature, and with His growingly gracious character, whatever

might be ordained Him of salt bread to eat, and of steep stairs to climb elsewhere, you would have said that He would always have had where to lay His head as long as His mother had a house of her own. But no. There was no bread He ate anywhere that was so salt to His taste as was the bread that our Lord both earned and ate in His mother's house. And there were no stairs in all the land so steep to His feet as were just those stairs that He climbed every day in the society of James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, His four brothers. With all its reverent reserve Holy Scripture does not wholly hide from us the long years of secret suffering that our Lord must have passed through before He left His mother's house. Nor are we allowed to shut our eyes to the continual heartbreaks that He was still suffering at the hands of His mother's sons long after He had left His mother's house for ever. 'For,' we read, 'neither did His brethren believe in Him.' And then there is this astounding statement, that they actually on one occasion 'went out to lay hands on Him, for they said, He is beside Himself.' It does not demand much imagination to see what a bitter cross our Lord had to bear as long as He lived in His mother's house, as well as all His after days, because of her house. But all He ever let pass His lips about His lifelong crucifixion at home, is veiled and softened into this proverb that He here lets fall for the warning and for the encouragement of all His disciples to the end of time: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air

have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.

You understand why it was that our Lord was so lonely all the time He was in this world? Had our Lord been like all other men He would have had where to lay His head like all other men. Had He remained on a village carpenter, and an ordinary townsman of Nazareth, He would have come in due time to have had a house of His own like all the other men of His city. But it was because He was not as all other men are that He had not the companionships and the relationships and the home affections that all other young men look forward to have. He was alone, and of the people there was none with Him. He was the Christ of God, and it was on that account that He was so sequestered and separated into an aloneness all His own. He had a life foreordained Him to live, and a death foreordained Him to die, that all made Him such a stranger on the earth, and even in His own mother's house. The marriage of the Lamb was never to be celebrated in this world. Am I not more to Thee, said His Father to Him, than the love of women? Am not I more to Thee, than sons and daughters? Say not, said His Father to Him; say not I am a dry tree. For I will give Thee in Mine house, and within My walls, a place and a name better than of sons and daughters. I will give Thee an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

But with all that to console Him and to comfort Him, our Lord had His own seasons of ter-

rible loneliness. He said that He had not where to lay His head ; but, all the time, He meant His heart. With His Father's love and all, at the same time, He hungered and thirsted, as much as any of ourselves, for the love and the confidence of those around Him. All His life He went about looking for nothing so much as for faith and for love. And as often as He found a little faith and a little love He drank again of the brook by the way, and again lifted up His head. And it was out of the number of those men who a little believed on Him, and a little loved Him, that He chose twelve in order that they might be with Him, as the Gospels have it, and that He might not be wholly and always alone. But He was bitterly disappointed in His expectation of sympathy and love and loyalty from the twelve. For, as it again and again turned out, He was never so lonely and so desolate as just when He was surrounded by His so-called disciples. Instead of relieving his loneliness with their appreciation and their affection, the twelve rather increased His sense of loneliness and desolation, till we hear His broken heart bursting out: How long shall I be with you! How long shall I have to bear with you! And even in Martha's hospitable house, where there was always water for His feet and a pillow for His head, we see how she pained His heart, till He had to remonstrate with her and reprove her. And when a never-to-be-forgotten penitent poured a box of precious ointment on His head in token of her thankfulness and her love, the treatment

she received from His disciples stabbed His heart far sorer than did the soldier's spear the day after. And then the day after, His life-long loneliness came to a head, and could no further go, till He cried out in His absolute abandonment—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me! Both heaven and earth, both God and man, combined to forsake our Saviour that dreadful day.

Another experimental and autobiographic proverb of our Lord's was this: 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.' Now, if ever there was a prophet without honour in his own house, our Lord was that prophet. More than once our Lord's heart was chilled and His tongue paralysed at the approach of His mother and her four sons to where He was preaching. And as He was, so have His servants not seldom been in this same matter. Some of our greatest preachers have left it on record that their power would sometimes entirely go from them at the sight of those whose presence should have been their best support, till they exclaimed, almost in their Master's very words, as they stretched forth their hands to their believing hearers,—the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. Able preachers have been known to die for want of those words and looks of recognition and appreciation which are so sweet and so strengthening when spoken at home. A great preacher confided to me but the other day that he always did his best work in the pulpit when his own household was not in the audience. But he

had no sooner said that than it was immediately given to me to make this answer to his sad complaint—It is enough that the disciple be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.

Now I feel quite sure that some of you are saying to yourselves that if you had been a householder in Galilee or in Jewry your Saviour would not have needed to repeat His proverbs about birds, and foxes, and homeless prophets, at any rate in your town. He would not have lacked where to lay His head as long as you had a house to call your own. And I fully believe you; but, at the same time, you must clearly understand Him, and must in nothing mistake Him. You must distinctly understand that it was not His head that was without a pillow so much as His heart. I do not suppose that our Lord, at His worst, had often to sleep in the open air and on the bare ground. But, for all that, He was in reality as lonely and as homeless as His plainest-spoken proverb said He was. Take His proverb home to yourself. You never wanted a table to eat at, or a bed to sleep on. But you know only too well what it is to be very lonely and neglected at a crowded table, and very desolate in a luxuriously furnished apartment. And what He really complained about in Israel, and still complains about among us, is the very few who, with any warmth, entertain His truth in their mind and Himself in their heart. The Lord of glory does not any more hunger and thirst for your meat and your drink. But He hungers and thirsts

more than ever for your faith and for your love. He is such that He will never be satisfied short of your whole faith, and your whole love; your whole mind, and your whole heart. Now, with all your willingness to put Him up in your house, how does it stand with your mind and your heart? How are you entertaining His message in your mind and in your heart at this moment? How have you heard and received His truth, and Himself in His truth, all this day? It was His hearers who so distressed Him at one time and so cheered Him at another time when He was going about preaching on earth. When His disciples pressed Him to eat at the well of Sychar, they found to their amazement that He had wholly forgotten His hunger and His weariness in His absorption in His sermon to that eagerly-listening woman. Take heed, then, how you hear in this and in every such house of His. For in your right hearing of His message to you about your sin and His salvation He still feels as if He were being feasted by you.

'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. Open to Me, for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' Let it be to-night. Determine, where you sit, that it will be to-night. Go home, shut yourself in, sit down to think, and to medi-

tate, and to read that which will assist your thoughts about Him, and your meditations on Him. Read and think till you fall on your knees. Remain on your knees till you feel sure that you have had an audience. Persevere in prayer till the Divine Presence overshadows you. Continue in prayer and in tears, if they are given you, till a peace that passes all understanding fills your heart. And repeat this experience Sabbath night after Sabbath night, ay, and week night after week night, till it becomes a habit with you, and till it is as true of you as it was of the psalmist: 'When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches: My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness: and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips.' It is to such an experience that your Saviour points when He says: 'I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.'

At the same time, in your most spiritual and experimental and evangelical interpretation of your Lord's homeless proverbs, do not overlook their most direct and their most immediate interpretation and intent. And especially this application and intent: 'He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me.' Spiritual applications and all—there is no mistaking the plain and practical intention of our Lord in saying that. Well, then, how do you stand to that? Have you an hospitable table toward those whom He sends to be received by you as if they were Himself? There are certain

houses in the congregation, and in the city, well known to me, that are never without some invalided missionary or some homeless evangelist. When we want to know the whereabouts of any such we always send to those houses to inquire. Now, how does it stand with your house in that matter? When you are summoned to deliver up your keys to Christ, and to render your account of them to Him, what will He have to say to you, and you to Him, about them? Be as spiritual and as evangelical as you like in your interpretation and application of His proverbs, but at the same time keep you an open door and a full table for those who come to your door in your Master's name, and on your Master's errands. Come, ye blessed of My Father. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. For inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. Come, ye blessed of My Father!

XXII

THEY SAID, HE IS BESIDE HIMSELF

Mark iii. 21

THIS painful expression, to be beside one's self, is simply old English for insanity. When we say that a man is beside himself we mean that his mind has lost its natural and its proper balance. We mean that his reason is disordered and deranged till the unhappy man is not any more master of himself. This sad visitation has many stages and many degrees of manifestation. A man is first seen to be odd, as we say, and unusual and peculiar in his ways. He is seen to be eccentric and unhinged in his ways. A monomania takes possession of him. An infatuation takes possession of him. And from that his distress sometimes deepens till absolute and hopeless insanity takes complete possession of the reason-bereft wreck. But, on the other hand, it is not unusual with us to apply this painful language to cases the very opposite to those of insanity. We sometimes commit the outrage of going about and saying that a man is gone beside himself, when he is far saner and far wiser than

we are ourselves. We say that such and such a man is gone beside himself because he looks at things with far other eyes than ours. And because he values things by far other standards than ours. He puts things first and foremost in his estimation that we put no esteem upon at all. He spends himself and all that he possesses on things on which we never spend one farthing. When any man's whole judgment of things, and his whole principle of action; when his mind and his heart and his conscience are all at opposite poles to our own; then, to defend ourselves, and to oppose and to assail and to discredit him, we say that he is gone beside himself, and has lost his sober senses. When we so speak about a man, it is a clear proof that either he is beside himself, or that we are.

Now it cannot but both greatly instruct us and deeply impress us to examine reverently and with holy fear into some of the times and some of the occasions when our Lord was said by those about Him to be beside Himself. For, again and again both His friends and His enemies said that so distressing thing about our Saviour. So far as we read in the Four Gospels, the first time that this was said in as many words about our Lord was soon after that epoch in His life when He went up into a mountain and continued all night in prayer to God. That so extraordinary act of His, and then the extraordinary things that followed that so extraordinary act of His, all taken together, made His kinsmen and His friends

decide at last to go out and to lay hold on Him. The whole country was ablaze with His extraordinary and unaccountable actions till His kinsfolk could not sit still any longer under the scandal and the shame of it all. This was not the first of many times they had felt uneasy and unhappy and at their wits' end about Him and His ways, but this was the first time they openly took this distressing step. What made our Lord spend that livelong night in that way was this:—The next day He was to take one of the most momentous steps of His whole earthly life. For, the very next day He was to choose His twelve disciples. A step that would have the most momentous consequences, both to Himself, and to them, and to the whole of this world, and to the world to come. He knew all that, He foresaw all that, and He felt all that in all its fulness. So transcendently important did He feel that intended step of His to be that the night before He took it He never closed His eyes. It so weighed upon His mind that He could not sleep, nor could He spend the night in any other way but in the most anxious thought and the most secret prayer. And thus it was that He went up into a mountain alone, and spread out the names of the twelve all that night before God. And it was that so extraordinary act of His, taken along with those extraordinary acts of His that followed it, which brought to a head the smouldering uneasiness and insecurity and anxiety of his friends at home; till they decided to take the strong

step recorded in the text. Now if He so spent that critical and epoch-making night, what must He both think and say of you and me on our epoch-making nights? When He sees us taking the most momentous and irrevocable steps in life, under no better guidance than our own impulses and passions, what can He say of us? He sees us making choices of people and of things that will decide our destiny not only for this world but for the world to come, and we never once go to our knees about it. We make the most fatal choices with a light heart, and with a heart wholly without God. His friends were quite right in what they said. Either He was beside Himself, or they were. And either He was beside Himself on that midnight mountain-top, or we are many a midnight of our lives. If He sees now how well it was that He spent that whole night as He did spend it, what must He think and say of us spending our nights as we do spend them before the great deciding days of our life? If any man lack wisdom, says James, the brother of our Lord, let him ask of God. Now, if God is what He is, and if we are what we are, and if prayer is what it is, then there is no other word for it—We are all beside ourselves.

Say we not well, said the enraged Jews of Jerusalem on another occasion, say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil, and art mad? That was their only answer to our Lord when He read their hearts down to the bottom, and told them, in true and terrible words,

what He read in their hearts. And you will find the same thing repeated all down the history of heart-searching preaching to this day. Till sinful men are taught of God to read their own evil hearts; till they begin by the grace of God to them to know the plague of their own evil hearts, there is nothing that exasperates them like the preaching that searches their hearts and tries their reins. No preacher has ever come to close quarters with the wicked heart of man, from Jesus Christ down to our day, without having had bad names hurled at him. For this is the sure mark of all true preaching, that it always begins by being quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and of spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. What can a man say in reply to that but the reply of the reprobate Jews to our Lord's heart-searching preaching—He hath a devil, and is mad? Why hear ye Him? But, then, there were other Jews who said, These are not the words of one that hath a devil.

But a day was fast approaching our great Substitute, or a night and a morning rather, when He was to be beside Himself indeed. If His greatest enemy had been in Gethsemane that night of our redemption there, he would have been satisfied. He would have been right at last in the most insulting things he had ever said about our Saviour. For your sin and mine, in all its hideousness, and in

all its hatefulness, and in all its hell-deservingness, was that night laid upon the Lamb of God, till the Holy Ghost Himself cannot find awful enough words to describe Gethsemane and its agony. All that awful night, and all next morning, our Redeemer went through such experiences of sin, and through such experiences of the wages of sin; He who knew no sin was so made sin that awful night that the chief of sinners has ever since had in Christ a Great High Priest. The most sin-laden man among us is now able to fall down before his Redeemer with such strong cries and tears as these:—'By Thy bloody sweat in the garden; by Thy sinless soul in its agony; by Thy head crowned with thorns; by Thine eyes blinded with tears; by Thine ears full of the insults of Thine enemies; by Thy face defiled with the spitting of men and devils; by Thy neck bowed to the earth under the burden of the cross; by Thy pierced hands and feet; by Thine heart stabbed with the spear; by Thy body broken, and Thy blood poured out; by all Thy known and unknown sufferings, O Lamb of God, forgive us all our iniquity, and subdue in us all our sin. For the sake of thine atoning death, grant us Thy salvation, O Lamb of God, and make us partakers of Thy holiness.'

Very few of you are able to bear such things, and I will not lead you into any more temptation of that kind to-night. But all the deeper students of divine things know the awful sermon

entitled, 'The Mental Sufferings of our Lord in His Passion,' and they will go home and will read it again. And they will be beside themselves for some watches of the night after again reading it, and laying it to heart. Now, it so happens; it has been so ordered, that just as I am putting these words on paper, a letter comes into my hands signed by the mother of a family. An able, well-read, well-written, scholarly-minded woman; a woman destined yet to be a mother in Israel. It is a letter such that it takes even me all my might to read it. For, in the terrible words of the text, the writer is beside herself. She is in her Gethsemane. Her inkhorn is filled with her heart's blood. And yet you may sit beside her at dinner some of these evenings and never once guess that your affable companion is my correspondent. She is such a lady-like, such a polished, such a winning, and every way delightful woman to meet. Beside herself as she is with her sin, she is like Paul; for, if she is beside herself, it is to God, and to her minister alone. What could I say in answer to her but the simple truth:—'My dear lady,' I said, 'you could comfort me. I am as you are, and you are as I am. Be like me. The first thing every morning, and the last thing every night with me is this: O Lamb of God, I come. Just as I am, and waiting not, O Lamb of God, I come.' And I had no sooner answered her letter than I chanced upon this in an old book that always lies at my elbow. 'How now, good fellow, whither away in this burdened manner?' 'A burdened

manner indeed, as ever I think poor creature had.' 'Hast thou a wife and children?' 'Yes, but I am so laden with this burden, that I cannot take that pleasure in them as formerly; methinks, I am as if I had none.' 'How camest thou by thy burden at first?' 'By reading this book in my hand.' 'I thought so; and it has happened to thee as to other weak men, who, meddling with things too high for them, do suddenly fall into thy distractions; which distractions do not only unman men, but they run them upon desperate ventures, to obtain they know not what.' 'I know what I would obtain; it is ease from my heavy burden'; and so on in a book that Spurgeon said he had read a hundred times, and which I have read myself almost as often.

And having been led up to mention Spurgeon's honoured name, I am old enough to remember the ribaldry with which his name and his work were treated, even by the best of the London newspapers, when he first began to turn London upside down. But it was enough for the servant to be treated like his Master, and the servant as his Lord. The genius and the spiritual sensibility of Spurgeon's rare mind were such; and the holy law of God and the free grace of God had so entered that young man's heart, that he preached both the law and the Gospel like a man gone beside himself. Till it was not to be wondered at that he was treated in the scandalous way he was treated. O that all our pulpits in town and country were filled with such demented men! O that Richard

Baxter's dying man to dying men were to be seen and heard in all our pulpits!

> Lo! this man's brow like to a title-leaf,
> Foretells the nature of a tragic volume!
> He trembles, and the whiteness in his cheek
> Is apter than his tongue to tell his errand!
> Even such a man
> Drew Priam's curtain at the dead of night.

XXIII

JESUS OF NAZARETH WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD

Acts x. 38.

THE text is our Lord's whole life on earth in one line. In one perfect line. In a line such that we can neither add one syllable to it, nor take away one syllable from it. All we have to do with this fine text is to dwell upon it, to enter into it and to picture it to ourselves, till our eyes affect our heart.

Well, then, to begin at Nazareth where He began, and from whence He takes His name.

'And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' So much so, that when He left Nazareth He did not leave His native town because He could endure to live no longer in it. He did not leave Nazareth as Jacob left Beersheba. Jacob had to flee from Beersheba because he had deceived his father and supplanted his brother. But Jesus of Nazareth never had to escape in that way from any place in

which He had ever lived, nor was He ever afraid or ashamed to return to Nazareth or anywhere else. He never had to look the other way when He saw this man or that man coming to meet Him on the street. He never had to go through another street so as not to have to pass this man's door or that man's window. He was never afraid to face the father or the mother or the avenging brother of any man or any woman that ever lived. He never lost an hour's sleep in fear for what might leap to light to-morrow morning. He had no anxiety in taking up the Messiahship lest any dishonour should ever fall on His great office out of His past life. And, after He had been ordained to that office, if He was sometimes tempted to leave His post and go to finish His work somewhere else, it was not because He had neglected His duty, or had in any way shipwrecked Himself in His present charge. We try to flee from the places that have become intolerable to us on account of our own accumulated faults and follies. But Jesus of Nazareth never knew that humiliation. He was the only man born of woman whose conscience did not make Him a criminal and a coward continually.

The four Evangelists try to find space for our Lord's greatest miracles. For the water turned into wine, for the pool of Bethesda, for the ten lepers, for the woman with the issue of blood, for the raising of Lazarus, and such like. But if all the good deeds that Jesus did, and all the good words He spake as He went about were to be told,

it is scarcely a hyperbole to say that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. How He went about, not only healing the sick, and cleansing the lepers, and opening the eyes of the blind; but everywhere pacifying enemies also, and reconciling offended friends, and turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers; softening and sweetening and healing the hearts and the homes of all men wherever He went. At every table at which He sat all men saw a never-to-be-forgotten example of temperance in eating and drinking and talking, together with an approachableness, and an affableness, and a brotherly love never to be forgotten. He never left any house without leaving a long-remembered blessing behind Him. The very servants who washed His feet before a supper party felt happier all the night after because of the way He spake to them and looked on them. To salute Him, or to be saluted by Him, even on the highway, was a benediction that remained with you all the day. Especially the good He did by what He said to all men as He went about. For He never opened His mouth but with wisdom. The way He spake at one time, and did not speak at another time; the things He said, and the way He said them, and the things He did not say. For a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a picture of silver. A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth; and a word spoken in season, how good is it! The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the

learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Peter expands and applies his own text in his First Epistle in this homecoming way :—'Leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps ; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth ; Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not.' Jesus of Nazareth alone could truly and fully say all that which Homer puts far too easily into his hero's mouth :—'I wrought no froward deed, said no rude word.'

What a contrast to all that has been your going about and mine ! How all that shuts our mouth, and brings us in guilty before God and man ! When we look at our Lord as He went about ; when we take every house He ever lived in, and every companion He ever walked with, and every table at which He ever sat, and every bed in which He ever slept ; when we look back at every temptation also that ever came to Him to do evil, and every opportunity that was offered Him of doing good to men and bringing glory to God—what a contrast are we to Him in all that ! And what a condemnation takes possession of us ! When the commandment came home to me, says the Apostle, I died. And as often as the life and walk and conversation of Jesus of Nazareth all come home to me I am like Paul, I also die. Do you, my brethren ? I wish you did. I pray that you may ever so die. For then, and then only, you will begin really and truly to live.

Peter here puts this forward as a sure mark

of his Master's Messiahship—that He went about doing good. All the other marks and seals of the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth are summed up in this single mark and sure seal. Other men might work miracles; might heal the sick, might cast out devils, might make iron to swim. But no son of Adam ever went about doing good but Jesus of Nazareth. 'As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. They are all gone out of the way. They all together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good; no, not one.' Only one, and He Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of God, and made of God to us our wisdom, and our righteousness, and our sanctification, and our redemption. And as it was His outstanding mark, so it must be our outstanding mark also. All men will soon know whose disciples we are when we begin to go about doing good. Not otherwise will He ever acknowledge us, and not otherwise will our fellow-men ever recognise us. Let us begin then at once to go about like Him. Let us set a watch on the door of our lips as He did, as often as we are tempted to speak. Let us recollect continually how He spake; with what wisdom, with what forethought, and with what previous reflection as to who would hear Him when He spake. Let us hold down all impatience, and all irritation, and all anger at the way other men speak to us and speak about us. Let us go about holding our tongue, and keeping our temper, and that will be half our salvation, and half our likeness to Christ.

And let us brace up our slack souls continually with some such soul-strengthening Scriptures as this :—'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' An hour with Epictetus is said to have been a tonic. 'Wouldst thou do good to other men when thou meetest them?' he demands of his disciples. 'Then, eating, do good to them that eat with thee; and drinking, do good to them that drink with thee. Bear with them; forbear with them; yield to them; give way to them; never vent upon them thine ill humour; and then thou wilt do them and thyself good continually. And, even as the sun does not wait for incantations of men to rise, so do not thou wait for shouts of praise to do thy duty. Do good spontaneously, and immediately, and thou wilt be loved like the sun, and men will come and bask in thy beams.' And his best scholar says to us on this same subject, 'Go about knowing everything, and having a name for all knowledge, you cannot. But hold down your own arrogance and assumption of all knowledge, you can. Spurn the idle praises of men, you can. Keep your temper with the stupid and the ungrateful, you can. Yea, even befriend and benefit them, you can. Be sincere, be dignified, be industrious, be serious-minded, be not too critical or too exacting with other men. This is the sure way of salvation for you; with your whole heart to do what is just and to say what is true. And to go about doing good so constantly, that

you will not have a moment left in which to do evil.' Truly, where Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius lived and spoke and wrote, God did not leave His Son without a witness.

There is one large department of good-doing that causes some of us no little difficulty. It is the risk lest we do good to bad people; lest we give alms to the impostor, to the unthankful and the evil. Now, there is no man among you, nor woman either, who is half so much imposed upon in that way as I am. I am cheated both out of my time and out of my money and out of my sympathy continually. Till, when I am now rebuked and now laughed at for my simplicity, I take refuge with that Roman lady who in spite of all that could be said to her, would send a costly gift to her friend. You may send it, they remonstrated with her, but Domitian will be sure to seize it. I had rather Domitian seized it, she said, wrapping it up, than that I did not send it. I take refuge with Miranda also, the name of whose portrait-painter you all know. 'If a poor old traveller tells her that he has neither strength, nor food, nor money left, she never bids him go to the place from whence he came, or tells him she cannot relieve him because he may be a cheat, or that she does not know him, but she relieves him because he is a stranger and is unknown to her. For as she never saw him before, so she may never see him again in this life. It may be, says Miranda, that I often give to them that do not deserve it, and that will make a bad use of it.

But what then? Is not this the very method of the Divine goodness? Does not God make His sun to rise on the evil and the good? And shall I be so absurd as to withhold a little charity from a poor wretch because he may not make the best possible use of it? Besides, when has the Scripture made merit the rule or measure of our charity? On the contrary, if thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. But when the love of God dwelleth in us till it has enlarged our hearts, we will make no more such absurd objections as these.' You may raise a laugh at Miranda's facility, but I have a forecast that in the long run the laughter will all be on the side of the Roman lady and on the side of Miranda her English counterpart. It has been said of Goethe that he always kept well out of the way of misery. Be that as it may; you must not do that. You must be like Jesus of Nazareth rather, who went about seeking out scenes of misery, and who rejoiced in every opportunity of showing mercy; till He died still interceding for His murderers. Let that same mind be found in you, that like Him you may be the sons and daughters of your Father which is in heaven.

But, not to perplex ourselves with impostors and undeserving beggars—what a heaven on earth this world would soon become if we all set out every morning to go about all day doing good, like Jesus of Nazareth. What a country this would soon be! What a city of ours this would soon be! What a congregation! What a house

at home would our house soon become! Let us all do it. Let every one of us do it. Let us all determine to work out our own salvation by going about doing good. You to me, and I to you, and Christ to us all. Why not? And why not now, and henceforth, and to all men? And especially to the unthankful and the evil.

XXIV

I ALWAYS DO THE THINGS THAT PLEASE HIM

JOHN viii. 29

THERE are more kinds of preachers than one. There are exegetical preachers, who keep close to the text, and who labour to draw out the contents of the text, and to press the lessons of the text home upon the hearts of their hearers. They are sometimes called expository preachers, and hearers of a spiritual mind are much delighted with such preaching. John Calvin and Matthew Henry are, perhaps, the best examples we have of exegetical and expository preaching. Then there are doctrinal preachers, who delight in the method and the order of divine things, and who preach more according to the creeds and confessions and catechisms of the Christian Church. And when it is duly subordinated to the exegesis of the Scriptures, such preaching is very edifying and very satisfying to hearers of a masculine mind. Among the Puritans,—the greatest school of preachers the Church of Christ has ever seen—John Owen is

perhaps the best example of doctrinal preaching, while Thomas Goodwin is by far the best example of expository preaching; especially on the Epistles of Paul. Then again, there are apologetical preachers, and ethical preachers, and devotional, and evangelistic preachers. And there are experimental preachers, like the Psalmist who said, 'Come all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.' Now our Lord was all these preachers in Himself. Sometimes He was expository and sometimes He was doctrinal and sometimes He was ethical and sometimes He was apologetical and sometimes He was evangelical. His preaching grew as He grew Himself and as His hearers grew. He studied in His preaching to show Himself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Till in one Gospel you will find Him full of one kind of preaching, and in another Gospel full of another kind. From chapter to chapter His tone and His manner and His matter will greatly vary, according to His varying audiences, and according to causes concerning which we are ignorant. But with all that He was emphatically an experimental, and even an autobiographical preacher. 'We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen,' was the continual seal which He set on all His preaching and on all His teaching. First and last, our divine Lord had come through, and Himself was, all that He preached. And every one who had ears to hear such things felt that and confessed that. Again

and again it is testified that our Lord's preaching was not like any preaching the people had ever heard before. For they had never heard any better preaching before than that of the scribes, at any rate not till John came with his law-work in his hand and with his two-edged sword in every hearer's heart and conscience.

Preaching in the treasury that day our Lord's thoughts took an autobiographical and experimental turn. 'He that hath sent Me is with Me,' He said. 'The Father hath not left Me alone: for I do always those things that please Him.' And, indeed, He had this same experimental testimony from His Father's own mouth before He began to preach at all. For, at His baptism which was our Lord's ordination, so to say, into His preaching office, as He came up out of the Jordan, His Father's voice saluted Him and sealed Him in these recognising and reassuring words: 'Lo! this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' The first thirty years of our Lord's earthly life is summed up for Him, and for us, in these words of His Father, spoken over Him from heaven, 'In whom I am well pleased.' My brethren, it is surely the most attractive and the most rewarding of all possible studies, to picture to ourselves just how our Lord lived as child, and youth, and man, till He began to be about thirty years of age. He commenced His life of pleasing His Father in heaven by being subject to His father and His mother on earth. And as time went on, and as He grew more and more in wisdom

and in stature, His own heart and His own conscience would gradually come to take the place of the parental commands of Joseph and Mary. And then His conscience and His heart would more and more be seconded and supported by the Word of God, which He read in the Psalms and in the Prophets continually. Till, as time still went on, new duties and new obligations would arise before Him, and new trials and new temptations would meet Him, among all of which His Sonship heart and His heavenly mind would instruct and direct Him what to do. And as often as He always did the things that pleased His Father—and that was every day and every hour—the light of His Father's countenance would more and more be shed abroad in His happy heart. And this would go on till Jesus of Nazareth did not live so much under a servant's law to God as under a son's love to God. He did not so much do this and that duty to God and man because that duty was written in the ten commandments of Moses; but, rather, because all the commandments and all their requirements were written and read in His own holy and loving heart. Till a whole lifetime of such a sweet and sure and ever-blessed experience enabled our Lord to say in the temple that day, 'I do nothing of myself: but as my Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.'

Now, in all this, my brethren, as in so much

else, the Apostle Paul is a sort of half-way house between our Lord and ourselves. For, in all this matter of always doing the things that please God, Paul stands as far below his Master as he stands above us. I can picture Paul, now sitting alone at his tent-making, and now walking alone on his apostolic journeys, and always meditating on his Master, and on how his Master always and in everything did the things that pleased God. Whereas he, Paul, apostle and all, always did the things that displeased God. I can hear Paul as he sighed the deepest sigh that was ever heaved from a human heart. I can hear him as he pondered and applied to himself these, to him, so awful words of his Master: 'I do always those things that please Him.' 'Oh! wretched man that I am!' broke out that holiest of men. 'For I know that the law of God is spiritual; but I am carnal—sold under sin! For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do!' Paul never can please himself, no not in the best things he ever does; and how then can he please God? He cannot, neither in thought, nor in word, nor in deed. Paul's very righteousnesses are as filthy rags in his own eyes. 'I do count them all but dung'—they are his own passionate words—'that I may win Christ and be found in Him.' And, even when he is found in Christ; even when Christ is living in Paul; such was the strength and such was the malice of his remaining carnality—to use his own self-con-

demning word—that he could satisfy his conscience and his heart in nothing he ever did. And this went on with Paul till he became the most experimental, and the most doctrinal, and the most evangelical preacher that ever opened a mouth. All Paul's experiences, both of the law of God and of the grace of God, worked together to enable him and to compel him to pen the Epistle to the Romans. That glorious Epistle, of which Luther says: 'The Romans is such a treasury of spiritual riches, and, as it were, such an overflowing cornucopia, that if you read it a thousand times over there is always something to be found new in it, so that the last time of reading it will be the most profitable.' My brethren, when we have read the Romans a thousand times over, and have read ourselves a thousand times into its doctrinal and spiritual and experimental and evangelical depths, we will, with its profoundly experienced author, be for ever shut up to the 'faith' that is there preached with such unparalleled experience and power. That 'faith' which in the judgment of God is ten thousand times better to us, and to Him, than all the good works we can ever do. For, to him who worketh not—that is to say, to him who cannot work—do all he can: to him who is as wretched as Paul was, because he could not do the works of God's holy law: to him who worketh not his faith in God's mercy and in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ is counted to him who has it, for the right-

eousness he has not and never can have. Do we then make void the law of God through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, by sending His own Son to our help, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled, first in Him and then through Him in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Or, as we have it put catechetically and dialectically in the fourth Gospel, Labour not for the meat that perisheth; but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life. Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom God hath sent.

Believe, my brethren; Believe and pray. Oh, pray far more than you have ever done, if you would please God. For, a thousand Scriptures assure us that nothing we can do pleases God so much as prayer; believing, persevering, intercessory prayer. Among many things for which we are indebted to Luke's perfect understanding of all things from the very first, I have often thanked that Evangelist for finding out this, and for putting it into his Gospel. 'Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou

art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.' It was not our Lord's being baptized that opened heaven, it was His praying all the time of His baptism that drew down the Holy Ghost, and, with the Holy Ghost, His Father's voice. It was in answer to His Son's baptism prayer, and it was in acknowledgment of His Son's thirty years of unceasing prayer, and of the life of holy obedience that followed such prayer, that the Father so spake to His Son at the Jordan that day. My brethren, if you would please God, and work out your own salvation, and the salvation of other men—pray. Pray for yourselves without ceasing. Pray for your children without ceasing. Pray by name for the sick, and especially for the dying, without ceasing. Pray for the bereaved as often as you read and hear of another sudden and sore bereavement. Pray for good men. Pray for bad men that they may be made good. And God will hear you, and will reward you, both inwardly and outwardly, as He rewarded His Son at the Jordan that day. God has so staked everything on prayer, that nothing pleases Him like prayer. Some of His reasons for that we see. But many of His reasons for being so pleased with our prayers we are not fully able in this life to see. But of nothing are we more sure than of this, that all His people, from His Son downward, who have greatly pleased Him, have been men of prayer. It is wonderful! It is almost past belief, that the best rewarded of all our works, should just be to ask, and to seek, and to knock. To kneel down

and to lift up our hands, and to lift up our hearts. It is most wonderful, is it not, that simple prayer should have held such a supreme place in the life of God's Son Jesus Christ; and should be ordained to hold such a supreme place in our lives, and should be the surest means of making us well-pleasing to God? And yet, with all that, who lives a life of prayer? Not one in ten. Not one in a hundred. And then a life well-pleasing to God, has its ever-accumulating reward in answered prayer. According to these closing Scriptures. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave in commandment. And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.' Amen.

XXV

OUR LORD AT TABLE

LUKE vii. 36

SIMON one of the Pharisees desired our Lord that He would eat with him. And He went into Simon's house and sat down to meat. And when Simon asked his guest if He would say grace, our Lord lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said something like this,—Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man. And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The eyes of all things wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. And having so said He then sat down to meat. When William Law was invited out to a meal in the England of his day, this was the way he used to hear and to see grace said at the table:—'In one house you may perhaps see the

head of the house just pulling off his hat. In another, half getting up from his seat. Another shall, it may be, proceed so far as if he said something. We can hardly bear with him that seems to say grace with any degree of seriousness, and we look upon it as a sign of a fanatical temper if a man has not done as soon as he has begun.' Simon the Pharisee had many faults, but he would have grace said at his table in a very different way from that. For my part, I am entirely of Charles Lamb's mind in this whole matter of saying grace and returning thanks:—'I want a form of grace for setting out on a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, for a solved problem. Why have we not a grace for a good book? Why have we not a grace before Milton, and another before Shakespeare, and another before the *Faërie Queene*?' Whether, therefore, we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do it all to the glory of God.

Our Lord on one occasion spoke to His disciples about Cæsar. 'Give unto Cæsar,' He said, 'the things that are Cæsar's.' And let us give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's in the matter now in hand. Plutarch, Cæsar's best biographer, tells us that the greatest of the Cæsars was a delicate eater. On the other hand—Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, said some evil-tongued men who fed their souls on lies and slander in our Lord's days. The best comment on that abominable utterance I ever met with is what I came on in Seneca the other day. 'Men say that

Solon and Archilaus were given to wine, and Cato himself has been taxed by his enemies with drunkenness. But he who says that about Cato shall, in saying that, rather prove that drunkenness is a virtue, than that Cato indulged himself indecently.' That is surely one of the noblest answers to a slander ever given. And I know no better answer to the slander circulated against our Lord. Let all be imitators of our slandered Lord. First in saying grace, and then in eating and drinking. Let us be imitators of Cæsar also, so far as he was a delicate eater. And so far as there was a Roman decorum and a Roman refinement and a Roman daintiness of manner at all those tables where their Stoic chaplains first said grace and then ate and drank and then returned thanks,—let us be like them.

Imagine yourselves invited to sup with Simon on that same occasion. Imagine yourselves set down within eyeshot and earshot of your Lord. Imagine you see and hear Him saying grace and then sitting down to eat and drink. But especially as He goes on to talk, and to listen to you talking at the table. Others, elsewhere, Psalmists and Stoics, might very well have said much the same grace as He said, and might have eaten with much the same decorum and delicacy. But I defy you to get listening like His, and talking like His, anywhere in all the world outside of Simon's doorposts that night. To begin with, what perfect courtesy our Lord showed to all men around that table that night. You would have thought that

the house and the table belonged to Jesus of Nazareth, so attentive and so thoughtful was He to every one who came in. Whether you had got water to wash your feet when you came in or no; whether Simon had anointed your head with oil as you came in or no; you soon forgot all about that as soon as you came near Jesus of Nazareth. You could not account for it, but you were soon saying to yourself that you had never felt so much at home, and so happy at a great man's table before. It was Jesus of Nazareth who made all the difference to you. Simon, with all his great house, and with all his bread and wine, had no heart; and having no heart he could not make any other man's heart happy. But then Jesus of Nazareth was all heart. And, what with His full heart, and what with Simon's full table; the combination of these two things made that a most satisfying and a most memorable supper party. Be sure to bring heart with you to every table where you sit down. Be sure you first show heart to God in the way you say grace or hear it said, and then go on to show the same heart to all who sit with you at the table.

And, then, what approachableness and affability there was in our Lord. What topics would come up all that night in conversation, and how wisely and well He would handle them all; and always taking less than His proper share in them all. The latest newsletters from Rome; the latest caravans from Jerusalem; the talk of the passing day in the town where He now was; who had died

that day, and who were to be married to-morrow; the way He took vexing news and news that distressed Him, and the way He took news that pleased Him; the kind of subjects He would dwell upon, and the kind of subjects He would let pass without remark; the kind of judgments He would pass on public men and public matters, or would not pass; and so on. 'It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say that he is one who never inflicts pain. He carefully avoids all clashing of opinion, all collision of feeling, all restraint, all suspicion, all gloom, all resentment. He has his eyes on all his company. He is tender toward the bashful, gentle toward the distant, and merciful toward the absurd. He can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which might irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and he is never wearisome. He makes light of favours while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort; he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. Nowhere shall we find greater candour, consideration, indulgence. He throws himself into the minds of his opponents, and accounts for their mistakes.' Now if that is on the whole a good definition and description of a gentleman; then if you had supped with Simon that night, you would have found a perfect gentle-

man beside you; if not in Simon the Pharisee, then in his guest your neighbour Jesus, as He was then called, of Nazareth.

Alexander Knox dwells in one place on what he calls the 'gaiety' of John Wesley. At first sight one is somewhat startled at such a word as 'gaiety' being applied to the great awakening preacher. And yet a new and an unusual word is very useful sometimes, if only in order to exhibit another side of some man's character than that side which we usually see. 'I will acknowledge,' says Knox, 'that nothing but the clearest evidence of deep piety could have made this gaiety of Wesley's suitable. But I must also think that as it was in him nothing but such piety could have produced it. Wesley's gaiety was what could only be seen in one who felt his religion to rest upon the whole nature and fitness of things, and felt himself at rest in his religion.' Now whether we would venture to say that our Lord showed gaiety at Simon's supper table that night, sure I am He showed no gloom. And if gaiety is the opposite of gloom, then let gaiety stand. Nor was His gaiety due to Simon's wine which made gay the hearts of all the other men. His gaiety was all due to that which is better than wine; that is to say His own loving-kindness. There was a sunshine and a glow in His face, and a melodiousness in His voice, and a good humour beaming out from Him in all He said and did. A good humour that made Him the Master and the Ensample and the Justification of Luther, and

Wesley, and William Guthrie of Fenwick, and Alexander Stewart of Cromarty, and Spurgeon, and all such evangelically gay souls. Geniality might be a somewhat more seemly word than gaiety to apply to our Lord. But at bottom both words are one and the same thing. And both go to the composition and the colour of that so genial parable of His in which He has such gay strokes as these: —'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. And let music and dancing be heard in the house. And they began to be merry.' And that too with a mirth that shall never cease nor run stale. Our friends the Wesleyans will not resent too much what Alexander Knox says of their father and their pattern-saint. May they all share in John Wesley's gaiety; and may all their best gaiety come from the same source; from the same deep and solid peace with God, and with one another, and with all men.

Our Lord's saying grace, and eating and drinking, and courtesy, and decorum, and affability, and geniality—all that I can easily imagine and realise, with more or less clearness to myself. But how I would have watched Him as this topic of conversation and that arose all night at that table. For I feel sure there is nothing in which we are all of us more unlike Him than just in the way we carry on our conversations at table. A holy man used to say when he returned home from a night of

table-talk that he would never accept such an invitation again, so remorseful did such nights always leave him; so impossible did he find it for him to hold his peace, and to speak only at the right moment, and only in the right way. And, without his holiness, I have often had his remorse, and so, I am quite sure, have many of you. There is no table we sit at very long that we do not more or less ruin either to ourselves or to some one else. We either talk too much, and thus weary and disgust people; or they weary and disgust us. We start ill-considered, unwise, untimeous topics. We blurt out our rude minds in rude words. We push aside our neighbour's opinion, as if both he and his opinion were worthless, and we thrust forward our own as if wisdom would die with us. We do not put ourselves into our neighbour's place. We have no imagination in conversation, and no humility, and no love. We lay down the law, and we instruct people who could buy us in one end of the market and sell us in the other if they thought us worth the trouble. It is easy to say grace; it is easy to eat and drink in moderation and with decorum and refinement; but it is our tongue that so ensnares us. For some men to command their tongue; to bridle, and guide, and moderate, and make just the right use of their tongue, is a conquest in religion, and in morals, and in good manners, that not one in a thousand of us has yet made over ourselves. But that One in a thousand sat at Simon's table that night. And, much as I would have liked to see how He acted in everything,

especially would I have watched Him how He guided, and steered, and changed, and moderated, and sweetened the talk of the table. For he who can at every table do that is a perfect man, said one who had often watched our Lord at table, and had at last learned of Him. And it may very well have been the contrast that James experienced in himself and in all other men, to what he saw every day in his Divine Brother; for my part, I believe it was nothing else than that which made that Apostle speak with such passion on this subject. As thus:—'If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue at table, this man's religion is vain. If any man offend not in word at table, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. The tongue is a little member, but it boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Who is a wise man among you, and endued with wisdom? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with the meekness of wisdom.' I always think of James and his General Epistle of morals and of manners, as having been copied out from his eldest Brother's life at home, and especially at the family table. And I always trace his hatred of an unbridled and an uncivil tongue to his own lifelong remorse for his own unbridled and uncivil tongue, when he and his Redeemer were brothers together at home and at the family table. Now, if any man among you wishes to be religious in this matter; if any man among you has been taking seriously what has been said

to-night, let him go home and lay to heart and begin to practise the third chapter of James. And along with it Bishop Butler's universally neglected, but universally applicable, sermon on the misgovernment of the tongue. John Cairns read Butler's *Analogy* once every year. If you would all read his sermon on the tongue once every year, and practise it every day, you would even yet become before you die what James calls a perfect man. And you would at last be found worthy to sit down with your Lord at His table above.

XXVI

OUR LORD'S HOLIDAYS AND OURS

MARK vi. 31

WHAT a never-to-be-forgotten time the twelve disciples must have had when at leisure and alone with their Master up among the hillsides and watersheds of Galilee! To have had His generous discharge for a short season from their far too hard work, and then to have been continually and uninterruptedly with Him when He was in His holiday mind—what a memorable experience that must have been! 'Come away,' He said to the overworked twelve, 'and I will take you to a place apart that no man knows. For if this goes on, we shall all sink under it before we have half finished the work that has been given us to do. There are so many coming and going that we have no leisure so much as to eat.' And having so said, He arose and led His disciples into a hill country that no man knew but He Himself. And all their after days His disciples remembered their first holiday with their Divine Master: the place of it, and the occupations of it, and the recreations and amusements of it, so high up among the delectable mountains of

Israel. Jesus of Nazareth had known the whole of that hill country, every foot of it, from the days of His youth. He knew all the places where the water-springs rose and ran among the hills. He knew where the fowls of heaven had their habitation which sing among the branches. He took and conducted His disciples to where the hills were watered from the chambers of God, where the grass grew for the cattle and herbs for the service of man. The trees of the Lord were full of sap in the place He chose for them to make their tabernacles, the cedars of Lebanon which God had planted with His own hands; where the birds build their nests, and where, as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. The high hills all around their retreat were a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies. And away up there, for days and for weeks, they held their Summer School of natural and revealed theology. No; the Stoics were not the founders of natural theology. The prophets and the psalmists of Israel first founded that heavenly science, and Jesus of Nazareth and His twelve disciples were the devoted scholars and the direct successors of those ancient prophets and psalmists. The Eighth Psalm and the Nineteenth Psalm and the Hundred-and-fourth Psalm are all full of natural theology; and those twelve natural theologians, with their Master at their head, had a memorable holiday-time singing those psalms and offering those prayers up among the highlands of northern Israel.

We are not told with any detail just how our Lord and His disciples spent their mornings and their noondays and their nights when they were on their first holiday together. But if we have come to think how He would have us ourselves to plan for beforehand, and then actually to carry out our holidays, that will throw back a sure light upon how He spent His holiday up among the hills of the Holy Land. Well, to begin with, we learn from this scripture, as well as from our own observation, that holidays are designed for those who deserve them. A holiday is like wages for work well done; and we must work for our wages before we begin to spend them. One of the best preparations for a happy holiday is to carry into it a good conscience for good work well done. And thus it is that experienced holiday-makers work their very hardest and do their very best just before their holiday time. They have learned by many instances that nothing ruins a holiday like a bad conscience about bad work. A bad conscience about work badly done, or left undone, is a very millstone round the neck of many a holiday-maker. But a good conscience is continual sunshine, even in wet weather. A good conscience is a perpetual feast. Let us be sure then that we are like our Lord and His disciples in this also—that we honestly earn our happy holiday before we begin to spend it.

The working world has always had its holidays. But there never were so many and so long holidays as there are nowadays. And the reason of that is

because holidays were never needed as they are needed nowadays. We smile as we read in the prophet that many ran to and fro in his day till knowledge was increased. And we smile even more at the complaint of the preacher that of making of many books there was no end in his day, and that much study was a weariness to his flesh. What would Solomon and Daniel have said had they seen our trams, and our trains, and our steamships? What would they have said if they had seen our publishers' weekly lists, and our booksellers' loaded counters? Working men never worked so hard as they do in our day, especially those men who work with their heads and their hearts. And then there is a haste and a hurry in our day of which our hardest worked forefathers knew nothing: till our holiday time is as indispensable at this season of the year as is the repose of the night after the hard-worked day, and as is the rest of the Lord's day after the hard-worked week.

Hackneyed in business, wearied at the oar,
Which thousands, once fast chained to, quit no more,
The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
Pant for the refuge of some rural shade—
For regions where, in spite of sin and woe,
Traces of Eden are still seen below;
Where mountain, river, forest, field and grove,
Remind him of his Maker's power and love.
To them the deep recess of dusky groves,
Or forest where the deer securely roves,
The fall of water, and the song of birds,
And hills that echo to the distant herds,
Are luxuries excelling all the glare
The world can boast, and her chief favourites share.

So sang William Cowper, a most delightful poet for a thoughtful holiday. And John Milton supports him with his stately prose:—'In those vernal seasons of the year, when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and a sullenness against Nature not to go out and see her riches, and partake of her rejoicing with heaven and earth.'

At the same time, while a season of retreat and relaxation is indispensable for the worker, and especially for the brain-worker, of our busy day, a wholesome and a happy holiday cannot be spent without its own proper occupation. As William Cowper again sings:—

> 'Tis easy to resign a toilsome place,
> But not to manage leisure with a grace.
> Absence of occupation is not rest;
> A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.

And Pascal, throwing all his power and passion into this subject, says:—'Nothing is so insupportable to man as to be completely idle. For he then feels all his nothingness, all his loneliness, all his insufficiency, all his weakness, all his emptiness. At once in his idleness, and from the deeps of his soul, there will arise weariness, gloom, sadness, vexation, disappointment, despair.' Something of that, if not the whole of that, most holiday-makers have experienced when they have set out to enjoy themselves without reflecting that nothing is so intolerable, either in town or country, as pure idleness and emptiness of mind.

Good books are as necessary for the healthy

mind on a holiday as good bread is necessary for the healthy body. And a wise and experienced holiday-maker will no more neglect to go to the bookseller than he will neglect to go to the baker. And what an intense delight are good books, new and old, on an autumn holiday! New books that we have not had time to read in the city, and old books that we want to read over again and again, as Jowett read Boswell for the fiftieth time, and as Spurgeon read Bunyan for the hundredth time; the best novel of the year, the best poem, the best biography, the best book of travels, or science, or philosophy, or of learned or experienced religion; and old books—our old Shakespeare, and Bacon, and Hooker, and Milton, and Bunyan, and Butler. It is only well-experienced and wary holiday-makers who can tell to new beginners what memorable summer mornings and summer evenings can be spent in the society of such old and long-tried friends as these.

But there are still other books for a holiday time besides those that the booksellers supply. 'Exempt from public haunts, we find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.' Yes; what tongues in trees the holiday botanist finds, and what sermons in stones the geologist! With one of Darwin's books in our hands, how our eyes open on the world around us! With such a book as Geikie's *Scenery of Scotland* well studied, how we learn to look with new wonder at the most familiar hills and valleys around our holiday

home! And with Herschell and Proctor and Ball in our hands, how we stand and worship under the autumn evening sky!

Perhaps the very happiest of all holiday-makers is the man who has some favourite hobby, for his hobby has this happy power about it, that it makes him forget for the time the whole world of things outside of itself. Be it shooting, or fishing, or botanising, or geologising, or cycling, or motoring, or catching moths, or inspecting cathedrals—if only it is the man's hobby, how happy he is, and how his hobby absorbs him! A day on the hillside with the sportsman or with the geologist or with the botanist, or at the river-side or loch-side with the angler or the artist, a day among the ruins of old abbeys and old Roman roads and camps—either he who rides his hobby is very selfish, or we who follow him about are very stupid, if we do not confess when we return home that such an enthusiastic day is an ideal day for a holiday. One of the most delightful holidays I ever enjoyed was spent as sole companion to a friend of mine who was riding a hobby of which I could not so much as hold the bridle. But so happy did his hobby make him, and through him me, that I look back to those days in Central France as almost my very best holiday.

But after all is said, it is not in any or all of these things that the true and sure happiness of our next holiday will stand. If we would be happy ourselves we must first make others happy. This is the Divine law that is laid on every human

life and on every human heart at all times and in all places—he only is happy who is doing good to other people. A Spartan's best holiday, said Thucydides, is the day on which he does his duty best. Let all intending holiday-makers lay that to heart. Let them not begin by seeking a happy holiday for themselves, but rather for other people. Let the husband resolve in his heart to make his wife happy, and the wife her husband. The brother his sister, and the sister her brother. The student his fellow-student, and the schoolboy his schoolfellow. Let those who have shootings and fishings resolve to share those holiday delights with those who have none of these things. Let those who have a long holiday cut out a short holiday for those who otherwise will have none at all. And let those who are well off in the world send for and make happy guests of those who are not so well off. And especially, let us be thoughtful and considerate toward the people in whose country we reside for a season. Let us not offend or vex them in any way. Let us respect their religious observances, their very superstitions, and traditions, and prejudices. Let us learn from them what they have to teach us, and let us not set up to teach them. If you are among Roman Catholics abroad, do not desecrate their sacred shrines. If you are among devout and scrupulous Highlanders at home, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Attend the church of your fathers all the more regularly and reverently that it is unfashionable and poor. And stand up for the

oppressed and the downtrodden as you have opportunity. Such things as these constitute the divine secret and sure guarantee of a happy holiday.

And there is this also. A holiday is a providential opportunity for restoring and reviving impaired and decayed friendships. What a pleasant surprise you could give this summer to some old friends who think and say that you have clean forgotten them. If they received a letter telling them where you are to be found and demanding that they name a day to come and see you and yours. 'As cold waters to a thirsty soul,' they would say, 'so is good news from a far country.' And your old friends' visit would be a red-letter day in your holiday; it would be the most sunshiny day of all the summer. 'Keep your friendships in repair' was a great saying of old Dr. Johnson. And by the way, be sure you put Boswell among your holiday books.

And then after your holiday is over and you have returned home, make a point of keeping up an occasional correspondence with some of the friends you made during your holiday. Send, or still better get your son or your daughter to take charge of sending, an old monthly magazine or a weekly paper to the gamekeeper's family. Send a parcel of books at Christmas to the district Sabbath-school. Send the theological book that all the town is talking about to the minister, and a pound of tea to that godly old soul that you sometimes visited. It will cost you next to nothing to do

all that, and it will keep alive feelings towards you and yours that much gold cannot purchase.

And then, besides a rested and a recruited body, be sure you bring home a better mind than you took away. Take some autumn Sabbath mornings of some length, and spend them all alone with God. Do not avoid and forget Him all through your holiday. Keep *that* friendship in repair. Make more appointments than one with Him, and He will keep them all with you. In the garden, by the river-side, in the wood, on the hill-top, enter into matters at some length and depth with Jesus Christ. And if there is any misunderstanding or any controversy between you and Him, refuse to return home till it is all set right. Resolve to do that. Set out on your holiday with that in your heart, and you will have as good times in Scotland as the disciples ever had with Jesus Christ up in the highlands of Israel.

XXVII

HOW OUR LORD AND HIS DISCIPLES WOULD READ THEIR NEWSPAPERS

LUKE xvii. 21

VERY much what the *Times* is in the British Empire of our day, that the *Acta Diurna* was in the Roman Empire in our Lord's day. The *Acta Diurna* contained the news of the city of Rome, and the news of the whole empire, very much as the great newspapers of London contain the news of that great city, and the news of the whole world. The *Acta Diurna*, true to its name, contained the whole news of every day; the births and the marriages and the deaths of every day; the floods and the fires; the weather and the crops; the accidents and the offences; the public roups and the private sales; the games and the shows; the athletes and the gladiators; the latest news from the seaports, and the latest despatches from the armies, so far as they were fit for the public. The publishers of the *Acta Diurna* had no printing-press to facilitate their task, but in room of it they had a well-trained staff of ready writers who so multiplied the sheets of news that the reading people of Rome had their *Acta* on their

breakfast tables, very much as we have our morning papers. And just as all her splendid roads brought up to Rome every day all kinds of correspondence from all corners of her mighty empire; so, down from Rome great bands of postmen rode and ran carrying the commands of the Emperor, and the decrees of the Senate, and the invoices and accounts of the merchants, and the notes of the bankers, and the newspapers of the city, east, west, north, and south, wherever there was a Roman officer or a Roman colonist or a Roman citizen who wished to keep himself in touch with the great metropolis. And just as occasional copies of the *Times* and the *Scotsman* will find their way to the remotest cottages and workshops of our land, so would occasional copies of the *Acta Diurna* be found in the cottages of far-off Galilee, and in the very workshops of Nazareth itself.

And much more would the sacred news of Jerusalem be carried continually, both by tongue and by pen, into Joseph's carpentry, as afterwards into all those hospitable houses where our Lord and His disciples sat down to sup and to talk together. Such things as these would be continually told and intensely listened to wherever our Lord and His disciples sat down to meat and to conversation. The difficulties and the dangers that were continually arising between the Roman residents and the Temple authorities. As thus: —'There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had

mingled with their sacrifices.' Some others also brought to Him the sad account of those 'eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them.' And Luke, always like himself, has been careful to preserve for our learning the verbatim observations that our Lord made when He was told the distressing news. Such things also as the scandalous affair of the golden shields, and the tremendous outburst of horror and rage that desecrating act awakened in Jerusalem. And again, such messages as that of Martha and Mary concerning the sickness of their brother Lazarus, and how He received that message, and what He said and what steps He took concerning it. The truth is, if we have at all learned to keep our eyes open when we are reading the life of our Lord among men, we can see for ourselves quite well just how He read and received both His letters and His newspapers, as also what lessons His disciples were continually learning from Him as to the way in which they should read and receive their letters and their newspapers also. To watch and see what were the things that most interested Him, and what were the things that did not interest Him at all; what were the things that rejoiced Him, and what were the things that distressed Him; what things He would have His disciples read over again and again to Him, and what things He dismissed as soon as He had tasted what spirit they were of; what things He loved to recall and dwell upon, and what things He discountenanced and suppressed all conversation about; to read such things as

these between the lines of the evangelists is a great example and a great lesson and a great law laid down to us. The sharp judgments also He would pass on one occasion, as also the lenient judgments and the warm approval He would pass on another occasion on public men, both in His own country and in other countries; in all this also there are immense lessons for those whose chief interest in public affairs at home and abroad lies in as close an imitation as possible of their Master in heaven. Says an old divine in old London at a time when London had as few newspapers as old Rome—'A sanctified heart will distil holy, and sweet, and useful meditations, out of all he sees and hears. So did our Saviour in the days of His flesh. All speeches of other men He heard; all accidents and all occurrences that happened to Him, did still occasion and raise in Him the most heavenly meditations and observations.' The seraphic Jonathan Edwards was as like his Master in all these things as any disciple of His I know. For Edwards always and only read his 'newsletter' in order to see how and where the kingdom of heaven was advancing on the earth. He recognised in statesmen, and in warriors, and in kings, and in peoples, not political transactions so much as 'tokens and instruments of heaven and hell.' And thus it was that he remained calm, and collected, and prepared, and resolved, and serene, amid all this tempest-tossed, and unhappy world. And in their own measure all those men attain to Edwards's Christ-like mind, who ask themselves as

they read their newsletters, how Christ would have read and felt and spoken over this piece of news and that; over this page of this day's paper and that.

'When any alarming news is brought to me,' said Epictetus to his disciples, 'I instantly fall back on this reflection, that the only real suffering that can fall on me can only fall on me from my own evil. Can any worse news come to me than what I already know about myself? Impossible. Or, has any one dear to me died? Well, then, all their times, and all my times too are in the hand of God. Has somebody written ill of me in the papers? If they have done so, that is their matter far more than mine. No man's pen can really injure me but my own. Has my father become my enemy, and am I told that he has made his last will and testament to my disadvantage? My true advantage and my true disadvantage is not even in my father's hand. God is my true Father, and His will is my everlasting enrichment. Have the jury and the judge pronounced against me? So they did in the case of Socrates, a far better, and a far more innocent man than I am. Their verdict and their sentence is their own affair. All that concerns me in the matter is that I make my defence as Socrates made his defence, with the love of truth, with submission to the will of God, with meekness and mildness, and withal with firmness toward my persecutors and my enemies. A bad tempered and an untrue defence is my only danger, while a bad sentence is their

condemnation. These are some of my morning meditations over my paper,' said Epictetus, 'and I advise you all to imitate me in that.'

Now, in doing my best to bring all that home to you and to myself, I am concerned to address the readers rather than the writers of our newspapers. I am not speaking to newspaper men; either proprietors, or editors, or reporters, or reviewers. If I did presume to instruct those men in the proper way to perform their duties they would soon turn on me and would tell me to mind my own business. And so I shall. They are not my business; whereas you are. It is not for the way they write, but for the way you read, that I shall be asked to give an account to Christ. Their writing will be their own account on that day when your reading will be your account, and when my preaching on this subject to-night will be part of my account. May we all three find each our own mercy on that awful day!

Now to what part of the paper do you turn first when you lift it up and open it? It is perhaps because I am no longer young; but, for my part, I always turn first to the deaths in the paper. 'Forefancy your deathbed,' said Samuel Rutherford to an old correspondent of his. 'The arrow seen beforehand slacks its flight,' said Seneca to his young correspondent Lucilius; and Dante as you see has put it in an immortal line for all Christendom. My imaginative insertion of my own name among the dead men of every morning sends me to the rest of the paper a man of an

altogether other mind than I used to be before I began to number my days, and to read in that way my own removal from among men. There are all kinds of ways in which men read the deaths in their papers. One reads as I have told you. Another reads, and before he has had patience to finish the paper, he feels compelled to take pen and ink and to write to that new-made widow to tell her to have the undertaker's bill sent to him, and to assure her orphan son that he will be seen through college till he takes his degree. Another, or rather the same reader, explains these glorious words to his children at family worship, the paper lying open beside the Bible—'The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory.' Another, when he glances at the births repeats this:—'Suffer the little children to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And then—May they all be born again; for, if not, it were better for all concerned that they had never been born at all! And as he thinks of this and that mother so full of joy that a man is born into the world, he repeats this Scripture—Her children arise up and call her blessed. And yet another reader when he comes to the marriages sees and hears in that happy list so many ships launched with huzzas and with clapping of hands; some to go to the bottom before they are well out to sea, and some to come to harbour through the stormiest of oceans, with their marriage banners still flying, and with the weighty spoils of a long

and a godly life. Take one moment over every marriage announcement, and say concerning the newly-married pair—May they be married in the Lord! May they both be married in their immortal souls to the Heavenly bridegroom!

And then if one had both the time and the talent he could spend the whole day over the advertisements. For the religious life of the city is to be read there: the charities of the city, the educational opportunities of the city, the booksellers' announcements, the amusements and the entertainments, and the various ways of killing time supplied to the city, the manufactures and the merchandise of the city also; and so on in all that explicit and displayed kind. And then the anonymous and pseudonymous advertisements. What needs and what wants are to be read there; what hopes, what fears, and what racking anxieties; what losses, and what gains; what broken hearts, and what joyful hearts; what illustrations of the Scripture that every heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy! You do not need to go to the theatre to see tragedies if you have a newspaper at home, and have also eyes and a heart to read it. You will be purified by terror and by love and by sympathy over that closely-printed sheet that nobody ever reads but those who have eyes to read nothing else. Take time some holiday and read through the whole of an advertisement page, and then tell me how you feel toward your nameless fellow-citizens at the end of your day's experience.

And then the police courts. Imprisonment; imprisonment with hard labour; imprisonment for life; imprisonment in solitary and speechless confinement; death by hanging, and so on. Take time, and think of the poor wretches and pray for them by name every day. Imagine yourself in their place. And learn to say as you see them led away to prison and to death—There goes John Newton but for the grace of God!

And then this also. If you are an author, or an orator, or a singer, or an artist of any kind; if you belong by your genius to any of those over-sensitive and thin-skinned classes of men and women, make your newspaper a divinely-intended means of your self-mastery and salvation. Every morning when you expect your name to appear in your paper, that morning is again your foreordained opportunity. Do not ask the paper to be sent up to your room with your early cup of tea that morning. And if it comes up send it away and say that you are now occupied with other things and that you will see it in the evening. Ask at breakfast if there is any news of importance in the paper. Ask if there is any better news from Macedonia, and if Russia and Japan are coming to amicable terms in the Far East. And if the paper has been used up in the kitchen before you have had time to see it, say, never mind; no matter; and be thankful for your escape. You were far too easily puffed up by what you read the other morning, and far too much prostrated by what you read or did not read another

morning. And all the time as the old Parliamentary hand said to the young Irish member in the lobby of the House—'Cheer up; nobody is thinking about your breakdown but yourself!' Be like everybody but yourself. Think about nothing else but your speech till it is delivered, and then think no more about it at all. Think only about your next speech and how to make it a better speech than your last. If there is loud praise of your speech or of your song or of your book in the paper, and if you eagerly read the praise, it will be to you like dram-drinking to a drunkard. If you drink it down greedily you must have more immediately, and you must have it stronger and stronger each new time, till if you do not get it, you will be for days after an absolutely intolerable nuisance to all those who have to live near you. Your praise in the paper is your poison; or else if you will make it so, your cure. And every such morning you have your soul-sickness or your soul-health in your own hand. You can make yourself either a bending and a bruised reed, or a stone wall standing four-square against every wind that blows. And your newspaper will do it. It will make you either a feather before every wind, or a strong, enduring, noble-minded man.

And then are you controversially inclined? Are you of a disputing and a contradicting temper? Do you diet your soul on party speeches and party newspapers? Are you one of those unhappy men who think everybody in the wrong but themselves? William Law began like you. He was

as hot-blooded, and as possessed with his own opinions, and as full of hatred and scorn of other people, as you can possibly be. Till this was one of the ways he took to cure himself, and to save his soul. When the post blew his horn at the market cross, and when all other men rushed out to get their letters and papers before their neighbours; as soon as he heard the bugle-call he rose from his desk and retired into a corner of his study where he never did anything but confession of sin and prayer for grace. And he remained there till he felt able to read in his letters and papers whatever God planned or permitted to come into the hand and the heart of His servant to try him. Law was one of the most brilliant controversialists that ever took pen in hand. If you are a party man, and if you wish to do great services for your party, as also for the literature and the religion of your day, read your Law day and night. Another method of cure is to read the best speeches and papers of the opposite side. Read the best that can be said for your opponent's view; especially if it is spoken and written with the style of love and with the elevation of truth. Do unto other men's opinions in this respect as you would have them do to your opinions. And always remember Butler's warning, that you differ from other men just as much as they differ from you. And as you more and more accompany William Law to the party-man's place of redemption and deliverance, it will more and more be borne in upon you, that all those con-

fusions and controversies and contradictions, that are so agitating men's minds, and are so darkening and depraving men's hearts, are, after all, but things seen and temporal, whereas your own soul, with all its holy and unholy passions, is unseen and eternal. Let nothing then any more be done by you through strife and vainglory. But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Let His pattern mind be always, and in all things, found in you, and in nothing more than in the way you read your daily newspaper.

XXVIII

OUR LORD AND THE SABBATH DAY

LUKE vi. 5

THE Sabbath is the subject of constant and painful controversy in the Four Gospels. And therefore it is that I like so much to leave that controversy and to go back and look at our Lord as He observed and enjoyed the Sabbath long before that painful controversy began. Nothing is more sweet and beautiful to think of than the way the Holy Child would be 'in the spirit' on the Sabbath day from His earliest childhood up to His perfect manhood. I like to picture to myself the child Jesus as He read these words for the first time in the first book of His mother's household Bible:—'Then the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.' And then, as the Holy Child went on to learn the Ten Commandments, He came on this also:—'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea,

and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.' And then this commentary on the commandment—'Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe it throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.' And then this essence of it:—'Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths; I am the Lord your God. Ye shall keep My Sabbaths, and reverence My sanctuary; I am the Lord.' And so on through all the prophets and psalmists, till He had His heart carried captive with the holy eloquence of the evangelical prophet whose magnificent passages on the sanctification of the Sabbath day, not only every devout heart, but every lover of our noblest literature knows so well. I delight to think of the coming Lord of the Sabbath preparing Himself and being prepared for His future lordship over the Sabbath and over everything else, as He found the places where these things were written, and laid them up in His heart, and practised them in His life.

Never and nowhere since the best days of ancient Israel has the Sabbath day been so sanctified and so enjoyed as in our own Church and country of Scotland. The Scottish Sabbath is a proverb from very opposite poles. It is a proverb of the peace and the sweetness and the sanctity and the spiritual

fruitfulness of the Christian Sabbath. And on the other hand, it is to other people a very proverb of gloom and weariness and burdensomeness, and what not. Which of these two poles best speak the truth is best decided by every man's own experience. If my experience is of any interest to any one, here it is. I have had more than sixty years' experience of a scrupulously kept Sabbath day, and it has all along been to me one of my chief blessings in a life full of blessings. I can testify with full honesty and entire integrity that from my childhood I loved the rest and the retirement and the reading and the church and the classes of the Sabbath day with all my heart. I did not know Wordsworth in those early days, but I can truthfully say that he has drawn my exact portrait in his two brothers, Leonard and James. The Sabbath books, few but the best, of those boyhood days of mine, abide with me to this day. And I wish your children and my children no better memories of your home and mine than I have of a good book at my mother's fireside on a Saturday night and a whole Sabbath day. For with us the Sabbath day tidiness and the Sabbath day quiet always began early on the Saturday night. Nor did I make Jeremy Taylor's notable acquaintance till long after those early days. But I subscribed to his testimony as soon as I read it. 'He who keeps the day most strictly, and most religiously, he keeps it best, and most consonant to the designs of the Church, and the ends of religion,

and the opportunity of the present leisure, and the interests of his own soul.' Nor did I know William Law till far too long after, but I have never forgotten these weighty words of his on this same subject:—'If a man should oblige himself to abstain on the Lord's day from any innocent and lawful things, as travelling, visiting, common conversation, and discoursing upon worldly matters, as trade, news, and the like; if he should devote the day, besides the public worship, to greater retirement, reading, devotion, instruction, and works of charity; it may seem but a small thing or a needless nicety, to require a man to abstain from such things as may be done without sin, yet whoever would try the benefit of such a rule, would perhaps thereby find such a change made in his spirit, and such a taste of piety raised in his mind, as he was an entire stranger to before.' And your own forefathers were wont to rise at six o'clock on the Sabbath morning in this city to hear Edward Irving, our Scottish Hooker, discoursing on this subject in this way:—'All letters of business, all messages of business, and all conversation of business, and all books which treat of business, we should exclude. We should not encourage any traffic, nor employ any Sabbath vehicles. I have no ascetic views of the Sabbath, and grudge not to the people or to myself whatever may refresh and comfort the body or the mind. And if they find that end to be served by walking abroad to meditate and muse upon the works of God, I commend them to that or any other

method which they find best for fulfilling the purposes of God. But sure I am, a crowded vehicle, a public inn, a crowded garden, a bustling highway, a park parade, are not the places most fitting for repose and refreshment; and they who so spend the Sabbath, and call it keeping the commandment, do but lie unto the Lord, and to their own soul.' But among all the Sabbath testimonies of our greatest and best men, there is no testimony that more impresses me and remains more with me, than that of Dr. Johnson. Boswell tells us that Dr. Johnson, in his forty-sixth year, wrote in his Journal this scheme of life for the Lord's day:—'Having lived not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its religious duties which Christianity requires; I resolve henceforth—(1) To rise early, and in order to that, to go to sleep early on Saturday. (2) To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning. (3) To examine the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week; and to mark my advances in religion, or recessions from it. (4) To read the Scriptures methodically with such helps as are at hand. (5) To go to Church twice. (6) To read books of divinity, either speculative or practical. (7) To instruct my family. (8) To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week.'

Now, that, to my mind, is a perfect plan and programme of a true Scottish Sabbath. Look well at it.

First: 'To rise early, and in order to that, to

go to sleep early on Saturday.' The Psalms of David are full of early rising on the Sabbath morning. And all up and down the Bible; and all up and down those books of biography and autobiography that come next to the Bible, the same practice is everywhere exhibited and enjoined. And an English writer who was well known to Dr. Johnson must have both rebuked and directed him in this very matter. 'I will begin with the last day of the week, and with the latter end of that day, I mean Saturday evening, on which I have fasted ever since I was a youth in Venice, for being delivered from a very great danger. And on Sunday morning I rise earlier than upon other days, to prepare myself for the sanctifying of it.'

Second: 'To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.' Dr. Johnson's Sabbath day instructor just mentioned says this also on this subject:—'This year I use some extraordinary acts of devotion to usher in the Sunday in hymns and various prayers of my own devising on Saturday night before I go to bed.' If any one is at a loss and wishes to be shown an example of an extraordinary act of devotion for a Sabbath morning, I know nothing better than Bishop Andrewes's First Day of the Week. In his magnificent devotion for the First Day of the Week the devout Bishop is carried above himself. Here Andrewes is as good as Hooker is at his seraphic best; this, indeed, is simply Hooker's immortal First Book set to temple music. It is such devotional work as this that justifies the saying that if once you begin to pray with

Bishop Andrewes you will continue to pray with him all your days. If you would learn by heart an extraordinary devotion for a Sabbath morning, consult the devotional Bishop.

Third: 'To examine my advances in religion, or my recessions from it, particularly the last week.' To examine in what I have made some real progress last week. In what I have kept a command over myself. When and where I have spoken advisedly with my lips. When and where I held my peace under sore provocation to speak. And when and where I subdued and kept under any other of my besetting sins. As also, when and where I receded, and went back. Against what persons I sinned last week in my anger, in my moroseness, in my envy, in the malice of my heart, and in my evil speaking.

Fourth: 'To read the Scriptures methodically with such helps as are at hand.' Who nowadays reads the Scriptures methodically on the Lord's day, or on any other day? Is there any other book in the whole world that is read so immethodically as the Scriptures? Any history, any biography, any philosophy, any poem, any novel? No, not one. Most men read the Bible just where it chances to open, and it is a bare chance if it opens some days at all. And yet what a divine opportunity it is to read the Book of all books methodically, if we only had Dr. Johnson's noble mind about method in the Bible and on the Sabbath day. 'And with such helps as are at hand.' Only, we must ourselves secure that the

right helps in this matter are indeed at hand. The right helps will not come to our hand of their own accord. When you want to have any real help of any kind at hand for any purpose, if you do not already possess it, you go to where it is sold and buy it, and you bring it home and put it in a place set apart for it, so that you may be able to lay your hand on it the moment you need it. And if you are not able to buy it, you borrow it, or you beg it, as Dr. Johnson first borrowed and then begged *The Appeal to All Who Doubt*, from Miss Boothby. 'I return you Law's *Appeal*, which, however, I entreat you to give me. Samuel Johnson, *impransus*.'

Fifth: 'To instruct my family.' I wish he had taken time to tell us how he did it, and how he succeeded in it. For many of us who are quite good hands at instructing other men's families are but poor hands at instructing our own. For my part, I think that just to make Dr. Johnson's Sabbath-day resolutions, and not to recede from them, is the very best way of instructing both ourselves and our families. For it is a true proverb that example is much better than precept. To rise early on Sabbath morning, as Dr. Johnson did, and then to fill up the whole day as he did —that will impress and instruct your family as nothing else will. To select an interesting Sabbath book also, and to read it, a page each all round, is a tried and a sure way of instructing a Sabbath-day family. To give each member of your family a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress*,

for instance, and the poorest father in the land can do that; and then to read all round a page each; and then to copy each into his own neat little notebook the happy expressions, and the striking names of the people and the places you have met with in your home reading, and then to index them all carefully; for my family and for myself I have never discovered any more delightful way of spending a Sabbath hour than something like that. As also to study so as to make the family worship as interesting and instructive as the wit of man can make it; as also the catechism and the hymn-book; what might we not overtake in our families in fifty-two such days every year, not to count many other days of more or less leisure and opportunity? 'Father, is this a good book for Sabbath?' 'Judge for yourself. Six days shalt thou read Greek, and Latin, and history, and travels, and stories. But the Sabbath is the Sabbath, and it has its own special and proper books. Think for yourself who is the Lord of the Sabbath day, and what He has made the Sabbath day for, and then decide for yourself what books are proper and becoming for you to read on His day and under His eye.'

And lastly: 'To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week.' If you are like me, you will need something much more pungent than mere meditation to do that. At the same time, much concentrated and uninterrupted meditation is absolutely necessary to begin with. And, among its many other priceless bless-

ings, the Scottish Sabbath has always been cherished and loved for the opportunity and for the assistance it gives to true meditation, and to the washing away of worldly soil, and all other kinds of soil. And a favourite Scottish psalm expresses that purifying operation to perfection :—

> Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me,
> I shall be cleansed so;
> Yea, wash Thou me, and then I shall
> Be whiter than the snow.

XXIX

OUR LORD AND THE BIBLE

LUKE iv. 17

FAMILY Bibles were as universal in Israel as ever they were in Scotland. The time was when no new household was ever set up in Scotland without a family Bible being found among its marriage presents. And Joseph and Mary, you may depend upon it, did not start on their married life without having the Word of God laid out at the head of their most highly-prized marriage possessions. And even if a complete and costly scribe-written Bible was not to be seen in every young carpenter's house in Nazareth, Mary would be of the mind of her first-born Son who said long afterwards to His disciples :—'But now,' He said, 'he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.' It was of their family Bible that the God of Israel spake to His covenant people, and said, 'And those words of Mine shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when

thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.' And was there a house in all Israel, from first to last, high or low, rich or poor, learned or simple, where that commandment concerning the family Bible, and concerning family worship, was so sure to be observed, as just in that house into which God sent His Son Jesus Christ to be born and brought up? To this day, when Almighty God has any future servant of His to be born and brought up among ourselves, He selects, as a rule, a house where there is a sanctified Sabbath, and a family Bible, and family worship. 'And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth.' And in this way this Evangelist who had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, might with perfect propriety and with entire safety have said to us that the Book of God, His Heavenly Father, was delivered to the Holy Child Jesus as soon as He was able to hold it in His hand.

And then to borrow His own words our Lord 'searched the Scriptures' from the days of His earliest youth till He discovered that they testified of Himself. Coleridge was wont to say that the Scriptures so 'found' him that he was compelled to confess their divinity. And Halyburton has a

memorable confession in his Memoirs to the same effect. And may it not be said with the most perfect truth that our Lord both found Himself in the Holy Scriptures and that they found Him? For never before nor since were the Scriptures searched as they were searched by the Child Jesus; both Child and Man. And never did such discoveries reward any other searcher as His discoveries rewarded Him. For He discovered Himself in the Scriptures, and then He discovered Himself by means of them. Holy Scripture was the golden key by means of which Jesus of Nazareth entered into, and took possession of, that mystery of godliness, which was Himself. He saw Himself as in a glass in every page of Holy Scripture. As He said Himself, Moses and all the prophets testified of Him; and He came to the full knowledge of Himself by hearkening to their testimony, by searching into their testimony, and by receiving their testimony. 'I have no books,' said a poor, but princely-minded servant of His, 'but I have myself.' And Jesus of Nazareth had no books beyond His Bible and Himself; but He read in those two great books of God till they became one Book in His hand. David had searched the Scriptures in a wonderful way and to a wonderful enjoyment. But David's Son excelled David and all other Scripture searchers who had gone before Him. With far greater depth and strength and thankfulness than David ever attained to, David's Son took David's words out of His father's mouth, and made them all His

own. 'Thou, through Thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts.' For never did Moses, nor David, nor Isaiah, nor any other psalmist or prophet in all the house of Israel, search into and meditate on Holy Scripture as did Jesus of Nazareth; and never were its precepts kept to such an illumination, to such a revelation, and to such a glorious reward. With what an unfathomable depth of awe and wonder did Jesus search into the Scriptures concerning Himself! And with what boundless adoration and praise did He more and more discover and find Himself in them! 'O how I love Thy law!' He exclaimed. 'It is my meditation all the day. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.'

Now, my brethren, that very same Book has been delivered to you and to me from our youth up. And along with it a fuller a clearer and a much richer Book. The complete and finished Book of God, Old Testament and New, has been delivered to us to see what we will make of it. To see how we will search it, and what we will find in it, and in ourselves by means of it, and then all that will infallibly decide what we are and what

we will make of ourselves, and where we will find ourselves at last. All the other books in this wide world taken together do not for one moment concern us in comparison with this Book. For the whole meaning and purpose and true end and design of our whole existence, as of our Lord's existence; all our Maker's purpose and intention in our creation, preservation, and redemption; our chief end on earth, and our endless enjoyment of God in heaven; all that is here, and is nowhere else. 'In Cicero, and Plato, and other such writers,' says St. Augustine, 'I meet with many things acutely said, and things that excite a certain warmth of emotion, but in none of them do I find such words as these—Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' When the Book was delivered that day to our Lord He soon found the place in the prophet Esaias where it was written of Him. Now, you have all had that same prophet delivered to you all your days. Well, have you up to this day found any of the places where Esaias has written of you? For example, have you found for yourself these two places about yourself? First this—'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in you, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.' And then this: 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' Esaias had found all that in himself long before he wrote it down about himself, and about Israel,

and about us. If he had not found all that, and all that every day in himself, he would never have had the boldness to set it down first about Israel and then about us. And then it was his continual finding of all that in himself that led him on to find Christ crucified in Moses and in the prophets till he became wiser than all his teachers in his famous fifty-third chapter. It was because Esaias was such a woful man to himself that he became such an evangelical minister to us. Woe is me! for I am undone, he cried in the Temple. But that moment the live coal from off the altar touched his lips, till he was sent to preach Christ as Christ was never preached before nor since till Paul also found himself in the same Scripture, and cried out, O wretched man that I am! And exactly so was it with Thomas Halyburton, that spiritual genius, first of Ceres and then of St. Andrews. 'All discoveries of guilt were conveyed by the Scriptures. God spake by the Scriptures in mine ear of sins which God alone could know; God who searches the heart. By the Scriptures the secrets of my heart were made manifest; and hereon I could not but fall down and own that God was in His word of a truth. And now I was ready to say—Come, and see a Book that has told me all that ever I did in my life; is not this the Book of God? And it was by the same Book that He let in upon my soul His whole will as to my salvation by Jesus Christ. Herein it was that He declared His name—The Lord God, merciful and gracious unto sinners in Christ.'

'Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself,' till their hearts burned within them. And that is the true way still. We preachers also, will make men's hearts to burn within them when we expound to them the Scriptures concerning ourselves. Experience is the true exegete in Holy Scripture, said Luther. Weep yourself, said the old Roman instructor, and you will soon make me weep in sympathy with you. Yes; all you who are candidates to be expounders of the Scriptures, search the Scriptures till you find yourselves in them as nowhere else. You have doubts and difficulties about this and that in Holy Scripture. Or rather, less about things in the Scriptures than about things that lie outside of and round about the Scriptures. Doubts and difficulties about the paper the Scriptures are printed on, about the ink with which they are printed, about their binding, and about who bound them up in the way they are bound up. Read Halyburton, and then search the Scriptures as he searched them, and your salad doubts and difficulties will soon disappear.

'O fools!' their Master said to those disciples of His who had failed to search the Scriptures for the things concerning their Master and themselves. 'O fools! ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory.' They had neglected that search, and thus it was that both His sufferings and theirs took them unawares and found them slow of heart to believe.

Whereas He had searched the Scriptures from His manger to His cross, and from His cross to His throne, till He was able to meet all these things well prepared and waiting for them all. Let us be like Him. We have the same Scriptures; let us have the same mind. And if we search the Scriptures with His same mind we also shall find written there all our intervening sufferings and all our future glory. And till we shall like Him be able now to rebuke and now to console those who weep over us, and those who charge God foolishly. And to say to them that all this is but what we foresaw from the beginning, that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be bound unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Let us search the Scriptures, like our Lord, for all our appointed sufferings till we are able to say—along with our Forerunner—Ought I not to endure all these things and then to enter into my promised rest?

O my brethren, since all these things are so, what a day that is for you and for him when you deliver to your son his first Bible! What a treasure-house of unsearchable riches you that day put into his hand! What a life-long search he has before him from that day! And a deeper and deeper search every day he lives. Till that day when, like Thomas Boston's dying elder, he will lay his hand on his greatest earthly possession and will say to it as he forever parts with it

—Farewell the Bible! And, then, the written word will immediately be exchanged by him for the Living and the Eternal Word. And till the earthly sanctuary, where you and he searched the Scriptures together with your minister will hear his Farewell! as he comes in sight of the heavenly sanctuary. Where the city shall have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. And where all who searched the Scriptures with Him and for Him on earth, shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads.

XXX

THOU ART NOT YET FIFTY YEARS OLD

JOHN viii. 57

THE Jews of Jerusalem did not know our Lord's right age, but they made a bold guess at it. They felt themselves safe in saying that He had not yet turned fifty. As a matter of fact He had not much turned thirty. Now why was their guess at our Lord's age so wide of the mark? What was it about our Lord that threw the Jews so far out in their reckoning? Why was it that He looked to them almost fifty when, in reality, He had only begun to be about thirty? There is not one single line written about our Lord that is not written for our learning. And this line also is written that we might in some new way believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through His name.

To begin with, the prophets and the psalmists of Israel always foresaw and foretold that when the Messiah came He would always look to the eyes of men to be very much older than He actually was. Though in Himself far fairer than any of the children of men, yet His offices and His experiences

would so disfigure and deface Him that there would be no beauty left in Him. His visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men. For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions: He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. These things said Esaias, when he foresaw Him and spake of Him. And David also foresaw Him and forespake of Him in the same way in the twenty-second Psalm. 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip; they shake the head. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.' Now, if all that is at all a true forecast and prophecy of our Lord's experiences, no wonder that He looked twenty years older than He actually was. For men's looks do not go by the exact

number of their years, but by a thousand other things.

And then when the Messiah did come; our Lord's daily life for thirty years in His mother's house, and among His brothers and His sisters, must have much aged Him while He was yet young. When I was condoling on one occasion with a public man on account of the injustice and the cruelty he was suffering out of doors—'O,' he said to me, 'you know I am very happy at home.' But our Lord could not say that. And when a man is not happy at home, you know how that undermines his youth and his health and his strength and his ability to bear the tear and wear of public life. And then all His prophesied Messiahship beginning to be laid on our Lord through all those early years in His so uncongenial home,—how all that must have bowed His whole inward and outward life down to the earth before the time! His own tender-hearted sinlessness; and the universal and rampant and hard-hearted sinfulness all around Him; His unspeakable and unimaginable pain at the sight of all that around Him, and especially in those nearest and dearest to Him; that filling His opening Messiahship for the first thirty years of His earthly life,—no wonder that when He began to be about thirty years of age He already looked like fifty.

Seneca tells us that as often as Heraclitus went out of doors and beheld such multitudes of men all living and dying in sin and misery, he used to hasten home again, weeping all the way. Hera-

clitus was of a far too tender-hearted disposition to be sent into this world, and thus it was that he himself was one of those men for whom he used to weep. And so was our Lord. The evangelists as good as say the very same thing about our Lord that Seneca says about Heraclitus. 'That it might be fulfilled,' says Matthew, which was spoken by Esaias, 'Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.' And they all tell us how He looked in pity on the multitudes and spoke of them as of sheep without a shepherd. And then John tells us how his Master groaned and wept at Lazarus' grave. Democritus, on the other hand, never came out of doors without incontinently bursting into laughter, such rank fools did all men he met appear to him to be. But then we are told by some ancient authorities that our Lord was never once seen to laugh all His days. He only wept the more at what made Democritus so jest and jeer. Take your New Testament and go over the names of the men and the number of the things that must have made our Lord weep at their sin and at the wages of their sin, and when you have added it all up you will hold with Holy Scripture that Jesus Christ was far far more a man of sorrows than ever Heraclitus could be. On every page of the Four Gospels you will come on men and on things that must have made our Lord's head to be waters, and His eyes to be a fountain of tears. Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? He asked at His disciples on one occasion in a holy curiosity. Some

say Jeremias, was their answer. And they made a happy guess who so said. For what has Jeremias left on record concerning his own premature old age? He has left these things—'Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not Me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every man of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.'

His own continual neglect of Himself and other men's continued neglect of Him, all added together, would all work together to age our Lord before His time. His too early hard work for His own support, and for the support of His mother's house, and for the relief of the other houses of poor people round about; His incessant working with His hands, that He might have to give to them that needed it; the many nights He never slept on account of both work and prayer; His long seasons of fasting and prayer of which we are not fully told; His long and weary foot-journeys, and His long periods of exhausting preaching, with an occasional fig from off a wayside tree, and an occasional cup of water out of a wayside well; all that must have visibly told on our Lord. He laid

down the severest rules on His disciples in the matter of their journeys and their lodgings and their meals, and He observed His own rules to the letter, and beyond it. He lay on the bare ground in the garden of Gethsemane far oftener than He slept in Martha's house in Bethany. And during His last week He wholly exhausted and utterly spent Himself on those terrible sermons that to this day make us old to read them. And then He went out all night to the Mount of Olives. I often remember the impression this passage in Goodwin made on me when I first read it as an undergraduate student—'This went on for the whole of that week before He was crucified,' says the great Puritan. 'For Christ, when He saw that He must die, and that now His time to die was come, He deliberately wore His body out. He cared not, as it were, what became of Him now. He wholly spent Himself in praying and in preaching. In this garden, where He had often received consolation and strength in prayer, in that place must Christ be first attacked, and there must He begin to suffer. For, indeed, God did so deal with Christ, that He would have all things that were most comfortable to Him to be most embittered to Him. He sweat His bloody sweat in this place where He had so often prayed.' And in all that Gethsemane only summed up and sealed His whole life of caring not what became of Himself, nor how all His comforts were turned to bitterness, if only He were able to finish the awful work, the

body- and soul-ageing work, that His Father had laid on Him to do.

Now it is enough in many cases that the disciple be as his master. And how many of such disciples in this matter have we known? How many fellow-students has every university man known who simply gave way altogether, and went down to an untimely grave through great gifts allied to great poverty? And they, in not a few cases, the most brilliant of men. I see one of them at this moment. His emaciated frame rises up before me at this moment. The best Greek scholar of his time, as he lay in his starved and consumptive death-bed, looked to my eyes as if he had been seventy instead of three and twenty. May God's best blessing rest on those men of means and heart who take to heart the fast-ageing and fast-killing struggle of those gifted youths, who, alongside of their gifts, have their Master's ambition to lay their gifts on the greatest of altars.

You may have seen speculations as to our Lord's temperament, as it is called. Whether it was predominantly of the sanguine, or the choleric, or the melancholy order. The students of these things will find some most suggestive and most reverential reading on this subject in the second volume of Keim. After we have read all and thought all on this subject, we fall back upon this: Our Lord's body and soul must have been the best compounded and the best balanced; His must have been the best temperament that was ever possessed by any of the sons of men. 'We,' says John

Owen, 'have not only the depravation of our natures in general to conflict withal; we have also the obliquity of our particular complexions and constitutions. But in the body and soul of Christ there was no disposition or tendency to the least deviation from perfect holiness. The exquisite harmony of His natural temperament made love, meekness, gentleness, patience, benignity, and goodness to be natural and cognate to Him.' At the same time, 'a more than ordinary depth of thought produces the melancholy temperament,' says one of the most deep-thoughted men that ever lived. And it was this that made our Lord to be a man of such melancholy. He saw far deeper into the melancholy of men and things than any other man ever did, and that made Him carry a correspondingly heavier load on His mind and on His heart. And this also aged Him, as it ages, in their measure and degree, all men of the same mind. Our Lord's exquisite and unapproached sensibility to all that He saw so deeply in all men and all things around Him, made Him the Man of Sorrows unparalleled and unapproached; till it is no wonder that it made Him look like fifty when as yet He was only beginning to be about thirty.

But the half of what so aged our Lord has not been told, and cannot be told. For our Lord was such, that not only had He eyes to see deeper than other men, and a heart to feel heavier than other men; but as if that were not half enough for His great office before God, in the fearful language of

Holy Scripture, our sinless Lord was made that which made Him so melancholy; in the awful words of the Holy Ghost, our Lord was made sin. And it was from His being made sin that all His unapproachable sorrow came, and all His increasing melancholy, and all His premature old age. MADE SIN. What a word! What an office! What a fore-ordination and predestination! And what a life-long and ever-increasing experience! Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, and wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me. But Israel doth not know. My people doth not consider.

XXXI

OUR LORD LAID IN ZION A STUMBLING-STONE AND ROCK OF OFFENCE

ROMANS ix. 33

TO be laid in Zion a stumblingstone and a rock of offence must have been a continual heartbreak to our Lord. To be made the occasion of so much sin to other men must have been a far greater agony to our Lord than it was Himself to be made sin. When He Himself was made sin He had such a joy set before Him that He was enabled to endure the cross and to despise the shame. But it must have been an unmitigated sorrow to our Lord to be made the occasion of so much temptation and so much sin to so many men all around Him continually. 'Behold,' said Simeon to Mary, 'this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.' But it seemed sometimes as if it was to be all falling and no rising. It seemed sometimes as if He was to be nothing else but a gin and a snare to both the houses of Israel. It seemed sometimes as if this was the only Scripture that was ever to be fulfilled in the case of our Lord; this terrible Scripture: 'Whosoever shall

fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder.' No wonder that our Lord sat on the Mount of Olives and wept over Jerusalem as He foresaw her everlasting destruction coming upon her, and all on account of Himself, on whom she so fell, and was to be so broken.

By far the best book wherewith to set about the study of this terrible text is James Durham's *Treatise Concerning Scandal*: one of the most characteristic books of all our old Scottish theology. 'Scandal,' says Durham, or offence, as it is translated in this text, 'is either given only, or it is taken only, or it is both given and taken.' Now that excellent distinction of Durham's will serve our purpose most admirably this evening in our treatment of our Lord's case; as also in treating of our own cases, in this whole matter of scandal; that is to say, in this whole matter of giving and of taking offence. Let us take, first, the case of our Lord Himself, which was the most outstanding case of mortal offence, universally taken, that the world has ever seen; mortal offence, universally taken when no offence was intended, and when no offence was in any true sense really given. 'Offence is taken only,' says Durham, 'when no true occasion of offence is given; that is to say, when an innocent man does that which is not only lawful but necessary to be done. And yet other men from the corruption of their heart do carp thereat and stumble thereon.' Now, this was completely the case with our Lord. He only said and did

what was absolutely necessary for Him to say and to do. And yet those who, from the blindness of their minds did not understand Him, and from the corruption of their hearts did not love Him, were constantly carping at Him and constantly stumbling over Him. They took offence, to begin with, at the low condition in which He had been born; at His lack also of what we would call a college education; then at the spirituality, originality, and unconventionality of the doctrines He preached; and at last at the whole of His walk and conversation among men. They were mortified, they were mortally offended indeed at the success of his preaching, and at the deep hold He had taken of so many of the people all up and down the land. And then afterwards they took insufferable offence at His cross, and at the whole of that Apostolic Gospel which springs out of His cross. 'We preach Christ crucified,' said Paul, 'unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness.' Just as we see men stumbling and taking offence to-day at the doctrine of the atonement, at the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, and indeed at one and all of the doctrines of grace. And it was our Lord's personal experience of all that which made Him forewarn both His disciples and ourselves by saying to us—'But blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.'

Then, still following out James Durham's penetrating distinction, there is such a thing as an offence given indeed, but not taken. We find

that kind of offence also in our Lord's own case continually. Both His disciples and the rulers of the Jews seemed sometimes to do little else but to give our Lord cause of offence at their conduct. But then He as continually never took offence whatever they said or did. Peter for one, was a very proverb of offence to his Master, till one day it came to a head when Peter having gone much further than usual in his offensiveness his Master turned on him with these scathing words—'Get thee behind Me, Satan; for thou art an offence to Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.' Our Lord was never nearer taking offence than He was that day. Only, though He felt the offence keenly, He did not really take it. As Durham says, our Lord's heart was so clean of all corruption that He could be angry at Peter and yet not sin. He was very angry that day but He did not let the sun go down upon His wrath. And Paul, whose apostolic life was almost as full of all manner of ill-treatment as his Master's life was, yet he was almost as free of taking offence as was his Master. There were times indeed when Paul had still corruption enough left in his heart to make him take great offence, and to retaliate on those who had crossed and offended him. But, as a whole, the Apostle is a great example to us of this noblest of the Christian graces; this noblest grace of overlooking and forgiving all manner of offences, and provocations, and insults, and injuries.

All this brings us to James Durham's third

kind of offence. That is to say, to that kind of offence where the offence is both given and taken. 'Offence,' says Durham, 'is both given and taken when there is something on the one side that is apt to draw another into sin, and when that other yields to the temptation and the bait is swallowed.' My brethren, the best way to understand this kind of offence is to go back often into our own past lives. This is an infallible expedient to produce in us, and to keep produced in us for ever, a broken and a contrite heart; it is the only way, indeed, to get produced out of our past lives that which will please God. Go back often then to all the times and to all the places when and where your sins led other men into temptation and a snare. No two of us are alike in our past lives; but each one of us will recognise and accept his own special case. Go back then to every house in which you have ever lived. Go back to every lover and friend you have ever had. Go back to every congregation in which you have ever worshipped. Go back to every controversy; political, or ecclesiastical, or any other, in which you were ever mixed up. Go back also upon all the hopes you ever raised in any man's heart, or in any woman's heart, and then afterwards dashed all those hopes to the ground. Recall to mind those rarely recurring prizes in life that you carried off to the lasting impoverishment and the lasting resentment of other disappointed men. Look often round about you at the happy homes you have built for yourselves out of the ruins of other

men's happy homes. Rejoice with trembling as often as you sit down to eat and drink at the tables you have furnished for yourselves, and that God has furnished for you, and all the time at the famine of other men's tables. It is impossible but that such offences must come, but woe to that man by whom they come, if he has not divine grace enough, nor common humanity enough, to see and to feel continually what a terrible stumbling-block he has been in so many things to so many men. Woe to him! unless his eyes are a fountain of tears, and unless his hands are full of all possible reparations and consolations, and his prayers full of all manner of confessions and intercessions continually. But who of us all, even with all that, can fully and entirely understand his errors? For the heavens above many of us are black with our errors, while the earth bleeds and groans all around us because of our errors, and hell beneath us cries How long! because of us, and because of our errors, and the still spreading evil fruits of them. Why, your very existence, sir, even if you had done nothing else, has all your days been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to some men. And then your talents, and your endowments, and your successes in life, have all darkened and endangered the souls of some men. And that to an extent that would horrify and haunt you if you only had eyes inward enough and spiritual enough to see their torn and tortured souls. Ay, and they all the time far better men and far more deserving men than you are. O

man, man, do you not see it? Do you not feel it? Does it not secretly embitter your sweetest cup? And does it not make your heart to break for that land and that life where truth and love shall for ever dwell? Where no man shall be any more a stumblingstone to his neighbour, but where God shall rise up and wipe all tears from all eyes.

Now my brethren, your future life and mine will continue to be as full of offences and snares to other men as our past life has been, unless we go back continually upon ourselves and upon other men in that self-condemning and contrite way. And unless we follow up all our distress and all our remorse with unceasing prayer for forgiveness to ourselves and for reparation to our victims, so far as reparation is possible, either in this world or in the world to come. And such is our future task that in addition to all such remorse and prayer and reparation, we must henceforth put on a great tenderness of conscience, and a great sensibility of heart, and a great spirituality of mind. We must practise a holy awe toward God, and toward all men, lest we should hurt irreparably any more of our fellowmen. We must humble ourselves to see and to admit how offensive and how injurious we still are to so many of those in whose way we come, and how we still tempt and snare and cast them down continually. Well may Durham urge us with the 'infinite delicacy' of our relations to the men about us. Well may he press us with the 'evangelical obligations' we all lie

under to attend to all that as we have never heretofore attended. Let us open our eyes then, and look well at ourselves in the light of all that, and let us look well at our neighbours also in the light of all that. Do I, indeed, stumble or tempt any one by anything in any part of my life? let us ask. Is there any habit of mine, have I any bad manners that fret and exasperate any one who lives with me? Do I create distaste, and dislike, and disgust, and even downright hatred, in other men, as some men create in me? Who are they, naming them, and what exactly is the thing by which I so stumble and ensnare them? And how shall I escape the heavy woe that is righteously denounced on such a reckless and injurious life as my life has hitherto been? And if we are in earnest about ourselves let us, among many other things, do these things. Let us walk softly, and thoughtfully, and considerately, where hitherto we have behaved ourselves rudely, and roughly, and with a hard indifference to the harm we have done. Let us be found willing to see and to admit what we have been in the habit of doing to offend and hurt others, and especially those at home. This is the turning-point—to admit to ourselves, and a thousand times better to admit to them, the things in which we have vexed them at home, and pained them, and provoked them. And in some respects, and towards some men, let us keep out of their very sight, as much as in us lies. If we could only manage to make some men to forget that we so much as exist, or have ever existed, what a deliver-

ance to them that would be. In the hearing of certain other men, let us speak much less; and, especially, let us never again lay down the law to them as we have been wont to do. And when it is simply not possible for us to keep out of men's eyes and ears and recollections, then and there, all the more, let us walk ever more and more softly, tenderly, considerately, and always with more and more honour, and more and more love. And, then, if after all we have done, and can do, there still remain in us whole mountain ranges of offences and obstacles to other men, and in our very existence, then let us, as our last resort, betake ourselves in this also to Him who was once such a stumblingstone and such a rock of offence Himself; let us continually betake ourselves to Him, appealing to Him—

> Rock of ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee.

And He will do it. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

XXXII

OUR LORD DESERTED OF HIS DISCIPLES

JOHN vi. 66

WHAT is one man's meat is another man's poison. And the sixth chapter of John's Gospel is a case in point. 'That blessed sixth of John,' said John Bunyan, speaking about the very same chapter that made so many of our Lord's disciples to desert Him. 'This is an hard saying,' they said; 'who can hear it?' And from that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.

I sometimes wonder just how our Lord would feel ever afterwards toward those many deserters from among His disciples. I could tell you if it would do you any good to know, just how some of your ministers feel when they meet with that same heart-searching trial and temptation in their ministerial life. But you do not need to be told that. You know yourselves how you feel toward any deserter from your political party. Or, again, if you are a shopkeeper you must know how you think and feel toward those former customers of yours who no longer deal with you. I some-

times wonder within myself just what my Master felt in His heart when He suddenly ran up against some of those deserter-disciples of His on the street. Or when He saw them sitting in a seat of honour in some synagogue into which He went to worship. Or, again, when He was compelled to encounter their special bitterness of opposition in some of those controversies and collisions of which His whole earthly life was so full. Of one thing I feel sure, His whole heart was at all times and in all places whiter than the snow. And thus it was that His humility and His meekness and His forgiveness of all manner of injuries have never had a parallel in any sinful man, such as we all are in such circumstances. I am quite sure that whatever He felt at any time toward any of those temporary and renegade disciples of His, there was never any real hatred of them in His heart. Nor any sinful resentment at them. Nor any scorn or contempt expressed at their utter lack of spiritual intelligence. Nor any smouldering spite whatsoever at them, or at any one belonging to them. But on the other hand, I do not surely need to tell you what you feel in your heart when you meet any of your deserter-disciples. Nor do I surely need to urge you to be often on your knees in secret pain and shame before God, continually importuning Him for a meek and a forgiving heart; a copy of that heart which He gave to His Son Jesus Christ, the meek-hearted Master of those deserter-disciples of His.

Our Lord had seventy and more declared and

devoted disciples at one time. But after that so soul-sifting sermon of His only twelve remained and kept still attached to Him. And it was when He saw His whole discipleship melting away from Him like snow, that He turned to the twelve and said to them, Will ye also go away? At one time or other in His life on the earth our Lord was in all points tempted like as we are. And at that terrible epoch of His life He was sorely tempted to give way to that sinking of heart to which all His servants in the ministry are so specially liable. Take it all in all, and all through his life, there is no trial so heavy to bear to a minister as when he sees his congregation melt melting away all around him. Till, where there was at one time full pews, and warm and thankful hearts, there is in place of all that, universal decay and desertion. And when all that comes through causes for which he himself is largely to blame, that does not make a minister's cross any the easier to bear. That sad state of things comes sometimes simply through the gradual increase of a minister's years, and through the growing inefficiency for duty that comes to all men through the increase of their years. Sometimes that decay of his congregation and that desertion comes through a preacher letting himself fall hopelessly behind the advancing intellectual life of his people; and especially of his young people. Sometimes, again, it comes simply through new and fresh and popular rivals, so to call them, coming into his neighbourhood. While, on some

rare occasions, a minister's case is not at all unlike the case of our Lord Himself. That is to say, it is sometimes the very depth and spirituality and evangelical inwardness of his preaching that makes the chaff fly off in such clouds till scarcely any wheat is left behind. No two cases of a minister's desertion are exactly the same and in everything alike. But from whatever cause his desertion comes; whether it is really an honour to him or simply a disgrace; take any poor minister of Christ in his defeat and dejection, and already his Master has been beforehand with him in that most heart-sinking of all his experiences. And His ministers all need at such seasons all that their Forerunner can feel for them and can do for them and in them. If it is because they have outgrown their people in the depth of their spiritual experience and in the heavenliness of their mind that their people steal away to shallower services; or, if it is more frequently the result of their minister's long-continued neglect both of his pulpit and his pastoral work; in either case, with what sickness of heart does he see the gradual emptying out of his once full church. 'What would I do,' said one of the best ministers Scotland ever possessed, 'if Christ's suretyship righteousness were not to be imputed to His short-coming servants?' Above all other short-coming men, let all ministers thank God that they have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of their infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as they are. Let them therefore, of all men, come boldly to the

throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

If Peter caused his Master, first and last, far more provocation and far more pain than any other of His disciples; he at the same time gave his Master, again and again, more consolation and encouragement than any other disciple ever did. If Peter often spake rashly and unadvisedly with his lips, at other times he said the very thing that needed to be said. 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona,' said his Master to Peter on one occasion, 'for flesh and blood have not revealed that unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.' And never did Peter, or any one else, say the right thing at the right moment as Peter did that day when all our Lord's disciples were fast deserting Him. 'Go away!' exclaimed Peter, 'Go away! Where could we go? I would like to know! Go away from the Son of God! Go away from my Saviour, who alone has ever spoken to me the words of eternal life.' No disciple of all the seventy had ever felt so many temptations to desert his Master as Peter had felt. Peter was staggered, and indeed quite upset, times without number, at what his Master said and did. A multitude of things that Peter could neither see the reason of, nor could hold his peace about, continually staggered Peter. But then over against all that, Peter's heart was riveted to his Master with chains and clasps of gold. And, speaking for myself, it is not because I do not feel both the deep difficulties of the Christian faith and

the besetting mysteries of the Christian life that I remain a disciple of Christ. For my part, all the infidel and deserter-books I have ever read do not go beneath the first surface of my difficulties both in my faith and in my life. If I were to draw out and advertise to the world all the reasons I feel for deserting Christ, I would far eclipse all those deserters whose imbecile arguments I have ever heard or read. But then all my difficulties of that kind do not weigh one feather's weight against the immense and overwhelming reasons I have to keep closer than ever to my Redeemer. I read the other day that Sir Leslie Stephen left Christ and left the Christian ministry with a light heart. Well, if he did, I will take it upon me to say that, with all his intellectual ability, and with all his knowledge of eighteenth and nineteenth century literature, he did not know the first principles either of himself or of the Saviour he left so easily, not to say jauntily. Peter was an unlearned and an ignorant man—the New Testament itself admits that. But then no one who ever saw Peter, or heard him speak, could have any doubt with whom he had been. And no one who has ever been with Peter's Master, to call being with Him, has ever left Him, and least of all with a light heart. The thing is impossible; absolutely impossible. It has never happened, and it never will happen. Lord, to whom shall we go? said Peter, with an expressive smile at the very suggestion; a smile that was like a flagon of wine to his Master's somewhat

sinking heart that day of so many light-hearted desertions. For my part, I am to be one of Peter's fellow-disciples, and for Peter's reason. I am to be one of Augustine's fellow-disciples also, and for Augustine's reasons, and I am to be one of Plato's disciples who says :—'If a man can neither find the whole truth for himself, nor come to it by the teaching of another, then, having chosen that which is the best and most indisputable of human doctrines, his knowledge of himself and of his own deepest needs, let him embark thereon, in default of any other ship, and then make the lonely voyage of this life. Unless indeed it is possible to discover some Divine doctrine on which to trust his soul securely, and without any more danger.' Now the believer in Jesus Christ, and in His Divine doctrine, has under him both the raft of self-knowledge, and the solidly-built ship of Divine Revelation. And with his own raft lashed securely to the heaven-built ship, he is slowly but surely making his way through fair weather and foul to that shore which awaits all those voyagers who love and follow out the truth as it is in Jesus. And who simply will not, because they cannot, forsake Him and His truth through whatsoever darkness and storm there is a need be that they should pass. 'Thou!' exclaimed Peter triumphantly, 'Thou alone hast the words of eternal life!'

It was deep Divine doctrine, far too deep and far too Divine for their shallow and unspiritual minds, that made the deserters of that day leave

our Lord. But even when that deep doctrine is as dear to us as ever it was to John Bunyan, there are other things that sometimes threaten to separate us from our Lord. A deep, and an ever-deepening, sinfulness of heart, that will sometimes threaten to do in our case what their Master's ever-deepening doctrine did in the case of those deserters. We will sometimes have such appalling discoveries made to us of the absolutely bottomless evil of our own hearts, that we will utterly despair of ourselves, and will hopelessly doubt whether we have ever been truly in the holy discipleship of Jesus Christ at all. The very desperateness of our case will sometimes tempt us to turn away for ever from Him who alone understands our whole case, and who alone is able to deal with it all. 'Depart from me,' we say with Peter at another time; 'depart from me, for I am the sinfullest of all men, O Lord.' But, while that is literally true; even with all that, we must not allow ourselves to fall into absolute despair. No, not for an hour. In the teeth of a raging conscience, and in the teeth of a heart like no other man's heart on the face of the earth, we must continually come and cast ourselves at our Saviour's feet. Let us every day, and every hour of every day, be like Peter on that other day, or night rather, after he had denied his Master with oaths and curses. Let us often go out into the darkness and weep as he wept. Let us also say to our Lord in the words of David as we lie at His feet: 'Cast me not away from Thy presence; and

take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy Salvation ; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.' And this also : 'Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.' Properly speaking, that is the psalm of a minister who has broken down the walls of Jerusalem in his own congregation, and elsewhere. But with very little alteration and adaptation that same psalm will suit all scattered congregations, as well as all deserted ministers, till they shall all be made one again by the peace-speaking blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.

XXXIII

OUR LORD'S FAVOURITE GRACES, MEEKNESS AND LOWLINESS OF HEART

MATTHEW xi. 29

WHEN our Lord says of Himself that He is meek and lowly in heart it sounds to us, at first sight, somewhat like self-praise. And indeed not here only, but all up and down the four Gospels the same personal note and the same self-appraising tone prevails. Till we are led to seek out, and with some anxiety, the proper explanation of that so unexpected and so startling manner of speech in our Lord. And then when we enter aright into that so universal habit of His and fully understand it, we see that it is just another evidence and just another result of the perfect purity, perfect humility, perfect simplicity, and absolute sinlessness of our Lord. He could say with the most perfect truth and innocence and seemliness, what no other man that ever lived could have said without presumptuous sin. He could say that He alone knew the Father, and that He alone could reveal the Father; and then He could say with the same breath that He was meek and lowly in heart, and all the time be as innocent of pride or

self-praise as if He had only said how old He was, or how many cubits high He stood in His stature. And in the measure that we become like Him we also shall be able to speak about ourselves, and to describe ourselves, and even to appraise ourselves, and, all the time, to do so as truthfully and as becomingly as He did. We shall then be free to tell to all men what God has done in us and by us, thinking only of God's goodness to us, and of our consequent debt to Him and to all our fellow-men. And all that will be but another entrance of ours into that liberty wherewith Christ shall yet make us as free as He Himself was made free. Butler, says one of his biographers, is often personal, but he is never egotistical.

Now, what exactly is this thing here called meekness and lowliness of heart? And when and where do we see these most excellent graces exhibited in our Lord? Just open the Four Gospels and you will meet with the meekness, and the gentleness, and the lowly-mindedness of Jesus Christ in every chapter. Lowliness best describes His birth and the household in which He was brought up. And the same word best describes His everyday life all down to His death. He filled up all His appointed days on this earth, if with words and deeds of divine authority and divine power, at the same time His whole earthly life was sanctified and beautified with the most perfect meekness and lowliness of heart. On every page of the Four Gospels you will read how He went about doing good with all patience and long-

suffering and loving-kindness. How He turned His cheek to the smiter. How He blessed when He had been shamefully entreated. How He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb; for the transgressions of my people was He stricken. And yet in all that His meekness and His lowly-mindedness were such that the yoke He bore was rendered easy to Him, and the burden that was laid upon Him was rendered light to Him.

Now it would not be a thing much to be wondered at were a meek and a lowly mind to be found in you and in me. For how can we be found other than meek and lowly-minded? How can we be haughty and high-minded? The thing is impossible. No man who knows himself at all can hold his head high or have his heart proud. Pride was not made for such men as we are. But that will not account for His humility and meekness who did no sin. He had always washed His hands in innocency. He had nothing in His past life to make Him either afraid or ashamed. No man could point a finger or throw a stone at our Lord. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And yet never was prostrate sinner so lowly in his own eyes as was the sinless Son of God. What was it? How was it brought about? And how is it to be accounted for? Well, to begin

at the beginning: Simply to be a creature of Almighty God was enough to make the Man Jesus of Nazareth the meekest and the most lowly-minded of men. Never did any other creature of Almighty God see down to the very bottom of all creature frailty, and vanity, and emptiness as did the best of the creatures. The perilousness, the perishableness, the absolute nothingness, of all creaturehood was seen and felt by the Man Jesus as never before nor since by any other creature of God, angel or man. And that such a creature as man should be exalted into everlasting union with the Eternal Son of God—that finished the incomparable meekness and humility which His bare creation had begun. Promotion, privilege, honour, exaltation: these things fill fallen creatures like us with pride and vainglory and a puffed-up heart. But Jesus Christ was all the humbler and all the more lowly-minded because of His adorable union to the Godhead.

Now, let us be sure that we clearly understand all this and lay it to heart. For it is all told us first for our learning and then for our example and our imitation. It was our Lord's meekness and lowly-mindedness that made His great burden so light. His burden was far from light; His meekness, and His lowly-mindedness, and all. But He could not have carried His burden a single furlong of His life's way but for His meekness under it. And it is out of His own experience that He here speaks to us. 'Bring but a meek heart to your burden, as I did,' He says to us. 'Bring but the same mind

to your yoke that I brought to my yoke, and see how easy it will feel.' Now, He so impresses us with what He here says that if He were lodging in this city to-night we would go to Him on the strength of this invitation of His. And we would tell Him the whole sad story of our cruel yoke and our heavy burden. But even were He here in the body, it is in the spirit alone that He could really assist us. Go to Him in the spirit then; tell Him that as His cross on the way to Calvary crushed Him, so your cross, your burden, and your yoke will not be long in crushing you into your grave unless you get help from Him to bear all these things. He may possibly remove your burden altogether if you are importunate enough. He can wholly remove it if that seems good in His sight. On the other hand, who knows, He may have such a plot in His divine counsels concerning you that He may say to you that His grace is sufficient for you, and that His strength is to be made perfect in your weakness. Go to Him in any case, and whatever He sees it good to do with you and your burden, He will at any rate begin to give you another heart under it. He will begin to give you what His Father gave Him. He will give you, burden or no burden, a meek and lowly heart. And a truly meek and lowly heart will enable you to carry ten burdens as big as yours, and ten yokes as galling as yours, and that to the end of your days on earth. It is not your burden that so weighs you down. It is your proud, rebellious, self-seeking, self-pleasing heart. Once make your-

self a new heart and the thing is done. Once get a new heart from Him—a humble, meek, lowly heart, and your yoke from that day will be easy and your burden light. Just try, for one thing, to see yourself as you really are. Just try to look at yourself continually as Christ looked at Himself. And if being a creature of Almighty God does not teach you your own place under Almighty God, then consider yourself as a sinner against God, and such a sinner. You have not reflected enough on a thousand good reasons that God must have for the way He is yoking you and loading you. If you looked more at yourself, and at what your salvation must need at His hand and at your own hand to work it out, you would bow your neck to His will continually, and would hold your peace. Had He dealt with you after your sins, and rewarded you according to your iniquities, you had not been here to find fault with the way He is leading you to pardon and peace and everlasting life. When you begin to look at yourself in ways like these, already your yoke will have lost half its fretfulness, and your burden half its weightiness.

'Come unto Me,' says the Pattern Burden-Bearer, 'put on My meek mind, enter into My lowly heart, imitate Me.' Go home, He means, and speak the meek and mild word where you have been wont to speak the high and hard word, and thus to exasperate your own yoke and the yokes of others. Hold your peace, and do not speak at all, about things concerning which you have been wont to speak so

unadvisedly and so bitterly. Or if you must rebel against your burden, and must lift your heel against your yoke, do all that to God alone. Kneel down in secret at His feet, and refuse to rise till your yoke is either lightened or your heart is strengthened. Rutherford writes in one of his golden letters concerning a cross that had such wings that they bore up both that cross itself and the bearer of that cross. And your yoke also will sprout wings if you come sufficiently close to Christ with it, and continue to consult Him about it and about yourself under it. For He still remembers all His own experiences, and He is like His Father in this, that He delights in mercy. Try Him to-night. Knock at His door to-night. Confide to Him your most galling yoke, and your most heavy burden to-night. O, how grand it would be if this very night you had all this glorious scripture for ever fulfilled in you! Let neither shame then, nor fear, nor despair, turn you away from your Saviour to-night. Take courage and come to Him, for He is as meek and lowly-minded, as accessible, and as affable in heaven as ever He was on earth. And more so, if that were possible. Though He be high, He is not any more high-minded than ever He was, as you will live to testify and tell, if you only take your case to Him. The truth is, this wonderful text sounds clearer and surer from heaven to-night; more heart-winning and more heart-commanding than ever it sounded on earth. Come unto Me,—our Lord says that from heaven to us, as He was never able to say it on

earth,—all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

XXXIV

THE TRUE VINE

John xv.

'BOUQUERON, above Grenoble, Sabbath forenoon, 19th April 1903. My Dear Robert, —After breakfast and family worship this morning, we each took our own favourite book and separated for the forenoon. I selected for my retreat the great vineyard that covers the sunny slope above Grenoble, and which commands a fine view of the rich valley and the beautifully-situated city below, and the splendid chain of snow-white Alps beyond. I know and am quite sure that I am now in the very heart of an immense vineyard, but it does not look like it. The scene all around me is like anything but a vineyard, as we in Scotland imagine a vineyard to be. For the vines all around me are the most unpromising, and almost forbidding things possible. They are black, dry, twisted, knotted, gnarled; hacked at the root with the vine-dresser's axe, and hewn to pieces in all their branches with his pruning-knife. The truth is the vines all around me, both roots and branches, are more like brands plucked out of the burning than

living things, or things with any hope of life in them. The apple-trees are covered with their snow-white blossoms. The cherry-trees and the plum-trees also are perfectly gorgeous with their gold and purple plumage. But it is only here and there that I can discover the smallest bud of green promise in all these miles on miles of vineyard. And yet though I have not been able to tell you the half of this hopeless looking scene, if you were to come to this beautiful land in autumn you would find this whole hillside simply groaning under its immense loads of gold and silver grapes. Now, dear Robert, being a minister, and always thinking of my Bible, and of my pulpit at home, this scene this forenoon has called to my mind the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel. For in that most beautiful chapter our Lord says to us that He is the true vine, and that His Father is the husbandman, and that we are the branches. Now, when we read that, and think about what we read, we at once see that our Lord was indeed the true vine in many ways; but first of all in His outward appearance to the eyes of the men around Him. Do you remember what the prophet Isaiah said about our coming Saviour hundreds of years before He was born? "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men;

a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not." Just as I would have despised these vines all around me this morning had I not known better. And then when our Saviour actually came to this world all that, and much more than all that, was fulfilled in Him. For He was born into a poor and a despised man's house. He had no schooling like you and your brothers. He was put to His father's trade when He was about as old as Aird, and He worked with His hands till He began to be about thirty years of age. But all the time, and in spite of appearances, He was the true vine, and He was all the time under His heavenly Father's husbandry. Dear Robert: learn by heart what your Saviour says about Himself in the fifteenth of John, and often ask the Heavenly Husbandman to make you a fruitful branch of the true vine.'

And now, my brethren, though it is not written down in so many words, you may depend upon it that a thousand times when released from labour on the Sabbath day, our Lord would take the psalm-book and would find the place where this is written: 'Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; Thou hast cast out the heathen, and hast planted it. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this Thy vine.' And when the book of the prophet Esaias was delivered to Him, He would

often find the place where this is written: 'My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein. And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.' And again, when He opened another prophet: 'For their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.' As Jesus of Nazareth, child and youth and man, read and re-read a thousand times these prophetical Scriptures concerning Israel; and as He read and re-read His own mind, and heart, and character; and as He read and re-read the minds, and the hearts, and the characters of all men around Him; and as the Spirit of prophecy more and more took possession of Him, Jesus of Nazareth came to see, and to be fully assured, that He Himself had been chosen and endowed and ordained to be the True Vine. Ten thousand times all this was stamped and sealed upon His mind and His heart and His will and His purpose till He was able, in the upper-room that last passover night, to speak out this most wonderful of all His parables to His disciples. Our Lord had never walked through a vineyard all His days without stopping His walk and discovering some new likeness in that vineyard to the kingdom of heaven. Till as time went on He came to see

Himself as in a glass in every vineyard He entered. He had often said it to Himself, but this was the first time He had ventured to announce it to His disciples. And what made Him speak so plainly that night was because He had just had the wine-cup in His hand, and had distributed it to His disciples; that wine-cup into which, as He looked down into it, He saw crushed all the grape-clusters of His whole life, as well as His heart's-blood in Gethsemane that night and on Calvary next morning. O, all ye who were at the Lord's Table this morning and this afternoon; labour to enter into your Saviour's state of mind when He said that He was the True Vine. Do your utmost to enter into His heart. Work your way into His imagination as He handed round the cup and said, I am the True Vine. My dear friends, do you ever, and of your own accord, think of these things? To tell you the truth, I am afraid of you.

'I am the true vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.' That is to say, no vine is ever a vine of itself. Every vine, if it had a tongue given to it, would say what the True Vine here says. It would say that it was its husbandman who had made it what it is. If I am a vine at all, it would say, it is all due to my husbandman and not at all to me. And herein is His Father glorified, when the True Vine lays Himself down in this Scripture before His Father's feet. His holy birth, His holy upbringing, His holy life, and now His atoning death, which is at the door; all the planting, and all the watering, and all the watching that went to the

production of the True Vine, is all recollected, and acknowledged, and comprehended by our Lord in that one word of His: 'My Father is the Husbandman.' 'I the LORD do keep it,' the Heavenly Husbandman had said as He administered His holy providence all through the earthly life of His Son. 'I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Only let Him lay hold of My strength. And He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root. Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.' Till a whole world of untold things that had passed between the Father in heaven and His Son on earth, is all wrapped up in this one acknowledging word of our Lord: 'My Father is My Husbandman.' Think of all that also, all you thoughtful disciples of the Son of God.

Words would fail me to attempt to tell you the express and the immense comfort that came to me that Sabbath forenoon in that vineyard above Grenoble. As I staggered about among those hard, dry, hopeless-looking branches all, as it seemed to me, ready for the burning, and as these words of my Lord were then and there shed abroad in my heart, 'Ye are the branches,'—what a comfort came to me! For that moment, as I remember well, and will never forget, every hacked and hewn and hopeless brand around me suddenly took to itself a tongue and spake comfort to me. 'Come back soon and see us,' they all said. 'Come back and eat abundantly of our golden grapes in

their season. Let not your heart be troubled,' that whole vineyard broke out all around me in one concert of faith and hope and full assurance to me. 'Keep up your heart, sir,' their thousand voices said to me. And I did it till I came home singing the fifteenth of John to take up my husbandry in watering and watching for another season among you. And often, both before that Sabbath forenoon above Grenoble and since, to me in certain states of mind there is no sweeter or more reassuring word of my Lord than just this: 'Without Me you can do nothing.' When I have again been engaged in squeezing oil out of a flint, as Walter Marshall has it; when men are apt to act as if things were to be done in their own strength, as John Owen has it; what a restoring rebuke, what a reviving and strengthening remonstrance it is to hear the True Vine saying: 'No more can you, except you abide in Me.' O disconsolate soul! you and I give ourselves a whole world of unnecessary and even sinful anguish. We forget our true place and we suffer for it. We are not the True Vine, far less are we the Husbandman. God, our Father, is the Husbandman. And His Son Jesus Christ is to His Father and to us the True Vine. And it is in Him that all our fruit is looked for from us, and will ever be found by us. After my Sabbath forenoon among the melodious vines above Grenoble I came home to my household, and sat down to my midday meal, as I well remember, singing these Gospel lines:—

I cannot do without Thee,
  O Saviour of the lost!
Whose precious blood redeemed me
  At such tremendous cost.
Thy righteousness, Thy pardon,
  Thy precious blood must be
My only hope and comfort,
  My glory and my plea.

I cannot do without Thee!
  I cannot stand alone;
I have no strength nor goodness,
  Nor wisdom of my own.
But Thou, beloved Saviour!
  Art all in all to me,
And perfect strength in weakness
  Is theirs who lean on Thee.

'Abide in Me and I in you,' is only one of His many so spiritual and so mystical-union expressions of that night, which it is impossible for me to explain to your satisfaction. But our Lord here employs an alternative expression which is a great explanation and encouragement to us. 'If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you,' He says. Now, I can understand that. That is neither too high, nor too deep, nor too inward, nor too mystical for me. I know not a few of His words already. I have not a few of them by heart already. And when He here asks that His words shall abide in me, He can mean nothing else but this surely; that I shall often recall and recollect His words; shall repeat them to myself at all times; and shall never cease to dwell more and more upon them. 'Abiding,' and 'indwelling,' may well be beyond

me; but to commit to heart some of His promises and some of His parables is certainly not at all beyond me. I can easily do that. Indeed, speaking in this matter only for myself, I already do that, and I do nothing else nowadays with so much pleasure as that. I do not think I ever awake any morning that I do not take my stand that moment on some of His words, or on some of His servants' words about Him. And so do many of you, I feel sure. Well then let us just go on doing that. Let us store our memories with His very identical words. Let His words dwell in our hearts richly, for He Himself says in this passage that to have His words dwelling in us is all the same as having Himself dwelling in us. I will give you again His own exact words on this matter to take home with you this communion evening. 'If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' That is to say—'Ye shall ask what fruitfulness ye will, as branches of the true vine, and you shall attain unto it, and so shall ye be my disciples.' O! what a rich reward will that be, and that too for such an easy task! Just to go home saying, and to keep on saying, the finest Gospel passages to ourselves, till all we ask for shall be fulfilled in us and shall be fulfilled by us. Amen. Amen.

XXXV

OUR LORD'S POWER OVER ALL FLESH

JOHN xvii.

OUR Lord's power over all flesh is far too high for us; we cannot attain unto it. His complete power over all men, and the far-reaching purpose of that power, is such a majestic thought that our minds give way under it. When we would think of it we fall down in amazement and in adoration before His feet. Even His ministering angels, who desire to look into these things, cover their faces with their wings before the blinding glory of these things. Even those elect saints whom the Father has given Him, and to whom He has given eternal life, even they can but cast their crowns at His feet as they sing, and say, 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints! Who shall not fear Thee, and glorify Thy name?' Why, then, has all this been written, if we cannot attain unto it? Why has all this been put into our hands if we cannot understand it? Well, Holy Scripture was not written to enable us to be God's counsellors. It was written and it is put into our hands

in order to make us wise unto our own salvation. And this majestic Scripture is put into our hands this night in order that we may take comfort and look up and say, 'My times are in Thy hand; make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant. Save me for Thy mercies' sake.' We are not asked to wade out into all the bottomless and shoreless seas of creation and providence and grace here and glory hereafter. What we are asked and commanded and enabled to do is, to apply this stupendous truth to our individual selves, so as to have our own faith sustained, and our love and our hope and our peace of mind and our adoring obedience, and all issuing in our everlasting blessedness—in our eternal life, as the text has it.

'Dialogue-wise,' as an old divine of mine has it, let us go back for a moment to the first original of our salvation. It is an high day in heaven. For it is the day of the first drawing out and the first subscribing of the eternal covenant of our salvation. The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost Their co-equal Secretary, are all taking counsel together concerning us and concerning our salvation. Putting our eternal predestination before the Son, the Father asked the Son whether He would from that day undertake both the creation of the children of men and then their redemption from sin and their everlasting salvation. At that great offer and opportunity the Son stood up and looked forward till He saw the end from the beginning. And foresaw at the same time all that would take place between the beginning and the end.

'On one condition,' He said, 'will I subscribe with my hand to this holy covenant. But that condition being secured, I shall delight to do Thy will. When, in the fulness of time, a body has been prepared Me, and taking it I descend and dwell among men, wilt Thou then and thereafter give Me power over all flesh so that I may give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Me?' On hearing His Son's one stipulation, the Father at once and joyfully assented to His terms, till the Three in heaven all put their hands that day to the great covenant of our redemption. And from that day the Eternal Son of God became the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. 'And I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like unto the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought the Son of Man near unto Him. And there was given unto Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages, should serve Him. And His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.' Our Lord was looking back to that day in a past eternity when He said in the upper room that night, 'And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory I had with Thee before the world was.'

Now, since all that is true as nothing else is true, what are we, each man for himself, to learn to-night out of all that? First, this: that the Father, to whom we all belong, has given to His Son all power over each one of us; has given into

His hand all things whatsoever that in any way touch us, or in any way influence us, for good or for evil. All the things concerning each one of us that passed between the Father and the Son in the beginning, if they should all be written, the world itself could not contain the books. 'This is such an undertaking,' said the Son, 'that, if I am to carry it out, I must have put into My hands the most absolute, unrestricted, and unchallenged power over all those whom Thou hast given Me. The most absolute and undivided power over everything, great and small, that will in any way affect or influence them. I must have it in My hands in what age of the world's history they shall be born. Who their forefathers shall be, and especially who their fathers and mothers shall be. Whether they are to be rich or poor, high or low, learned or unlearned. Their tutors and their schoolmasters also. All their companionships also. All their lovers and all their friends. Their husbands and their wives, with their sons and their daughters. The furnishing of their table, and the fulness or the emptiness of their cup. All the crooks in their lot, and all the thorns in their flesh. All their hopes and all their fears, and all the fulfilments of their hopes, and all the shipwrecks of the same.' And it was so. All power was put into the hands of Jesus Christ, till He was able to offer that intercessory prayer on that night of our redemption.

And we all know that all that has been so in our own experience. You have discovered all that in your own experience, have you not? You have

seen His hand in your father, and in your mother, have you not? in your lover, and in your friend? In all the situations and in all the stations of your past and present life; step after step, circumstance after circumstance, house after house, city after city, friendship after friendship, relationship after relationship, preacher after preacher, author after author; His hand has been conspicuous to you in all these things, has it not? Your evil hearts, also, and your evil habits; the temptations into which you willingly walked, and the temptations into which you were suddenly surprised; with all the doors of escape that were so wonderfully opened to you by no other hand than His? If you would number them, they are more than the sand. And still they are new every morning. For He has promised that where He has once begun a good work He will Himself see to its being finished. Till we are justified in comforting our anxious hearts, and in saying that the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us, and that His mercy endureth for ever, and that He will not forsake the work of His own hands.

And then, expounding His own words to us He says, 'This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' He does not say in as many words that He holds His power over us, and administrates His power upon us, that we may come to know ourselves. He does not actually say that, but He most certainly and most profoundly means it. And more than that, I feel sure that some of you are sometimes tempted to think

that He is not at all employing His power over you to enable you to know either His Father or Himself, but only more and more to thrust upon you the dreadful knowledge of yourself. But then while that is most true, you must remember that truly and dreadfully to know yourself is the only possible way by which you can ever come to know either the true God or His Son Jesus Christ. You must know and you must remember that in the manner and in the measure that you know yourself, in that exact manner and in that exact measure will you ever know the Father or the Son, or one single syllable of the Gospel of the Son. You are quite right therefore. You are absolutely and incontrovertibly right. He is determined upon your knowledge of yourself first, in all its heart-breaking experiences. But then through that, and immediately following that, you will have the most sure and certain knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent to give you the true knowledge of the true God. The true and experimental knowledge that is, of the electing love of the Father, and the justifying righteousness of the Son, and all the spirituality and true holiness of your sanctification by the Holy Spirit. And, therefore, thus saith the Lord, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might, and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things do I delight.'

Now, my brethren, you know best yourselves how you look at all these things, and what you think about all these things, as also whether you ever think about them at all. You know best yourselves what you are seeking after as your chiefest good, and as your heart's one desire out of this present world. But whatever your chief end in life may be, your Saviour's chief end concerning you is clear: it is so published in a thousand Scriptures that it cannot be overlooked or mistaken. It is nothing less than your eternal life; it is nothing less than your personal knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. He here makes it as plain as plain can be what His whole end and design toward you is, and will always be. He looks on you, and on all your affairs, in the light of your eternal life. He holds all His divine power over you and over all your affairs for one end only, and that is to give unto you eternal life. If that miscarries in His hands—none of them are lost, He says, but the son of perdition. He looks on you in the light of eternal life alone; and He refuses to let any of His dealings with you, or any part of His rule over you to be judged, to be either praised or blamed, till that day when you will either enter on your eternal life with Him for ever, or will be for ever shut out of His presence. And more than that, you will never understand either Him, or any single one of His appointments concerning you, or of His administrations over you and your affairs, till you begin to look at all these things in the same light that He looks at them.

But then, when you begin to do that, in His light you will see light clearly. Your eternal life is the true key to all the Father's secret counsels concerning you; to all the Son's deep administrations over you; and to all the Holy Spirit's secret operations within you. Be like that wise and deeply experienced psalmist then who said what is recorded in his psalm for our learning: 'As for me,' he said, 'my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipped. For all day have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. When I thought to know this it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary; but then understood I God's end with me. So foolish was I hitherto, and ignorant, till I went into the sanctuary. But now I see that I am continually with Thee. Thou hast holden me by my right hand, and Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.'

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